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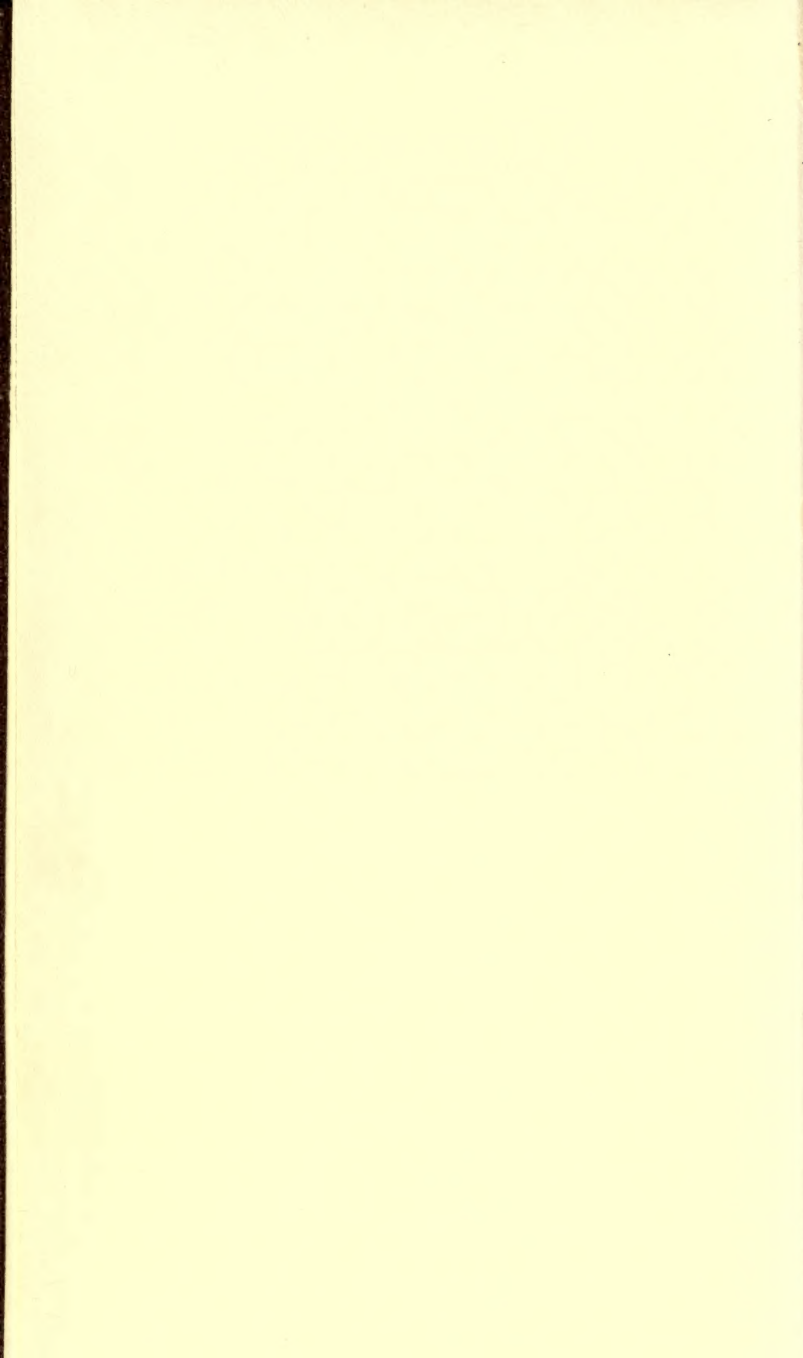












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THE WORKS

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OF

THE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

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# THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES:

OR,

A VIEW

OF

THE EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, AND  
INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

*THEOLOGICÆ autem objectum est ipse Deus. Habent aliæ omnes scientiæ sua objecta, nobilia certe, et digna in quibus humana mens considerandis tempus, otium, et diligentiam adhibeat. Hæc una circa Ens entium et Causam causarum, circa Principium naturæ, et gratiæ in natura existentis, naturæ adsistentis, et naturam circumsistentis, versatur. Dignissimum itaque hoc est Objectum et plenum venerandæ Majestatis, præcellensque reliquis.*

ARMINIUS.





# THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.

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## PART SECOND.

### DOCTRINES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, CONTINUED.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

*Redemption :—Principles of God's moral Government.*

WE have established it as the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, that all men are born with a corrupted nature ; that from this rebellion against the divine authority follows universally ; and that, in consequence, the whole world, as St. Paul forcibly expresses it, is “ guilty before God.”

Before any issue proceeded from the first pair, they were restored to the divine favour. Had no method of forgiveness and restoration been established with respect to human offenders, the penalty of death must have been forthwith executed upon them, there being no doubt of the fact of their delinquency, and no reason, in that case, existing for delaying their punishment ; and so with, and in, them the human race must have utterly perished. The covenant of pardon and salvation which was made with Adam did not, however, terminate upon him, but comprehended all his race. This is a point made indubitable by those passages we have already quoted from the Apostle Paul, in which he contrasts the injury which the human race have received from the disobedience of Adam, with the benefit brought to them by the obedience

of Jesus Christ: "For if, through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."—"Therefore as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

Since, then, the penalty of death was not immediately executed in all its extent upon the first sinning pair, and is not immediately executed upon their sinning descendants; since they were actually restored to the divine favour, and the same blessing is offered to us; our inquiries must next be directed to the nature and reason of that change in the conduct of the divine Being, in which he lays aside, in so great a measure, the sternness and inflexibility of his office of Judge, and becomes the Dispenser of grace and favour to the guilty themselves.

The existence of a divine law, obligatory upon man, is not doubted by any who admit the existence and government of God. We have already seen its requirements, its extent, and its sanctions; and have proved that its penalty consists, not merely in severe sufferings in this life, but in death, a sentence which affects both the body and soul,—the former being left under the power of corruption, the other being separated from God, and made liable to punishment in another state of being.

It is important to keep in view the fact of the extent and severity of the punishment denounced against all transgressions of the law of God; because this is illustrative of the character of God both with reference to his essential holiness, and to his proceedings as Governor of the world. The miseries connected with sin, as consequences affecting the transgressor himself and society, and the afflictions, personal and national, which are the results of divine visitation, must all be regarded as punitive. Corrective effects may be secondarily connected with them, but, primarily, they are all penal. It would be abhorrent to all our notions of the divine character, to suppose perfectly innocent beings subject to such miseries; and they are only

therefore, to be accounted for on the ground of their being the results of a supreme judicial administration, which bears a strict, and often a very terrible, character. If, to the sufferings and death which result from offences in the present life, we add the future punishment of the wicked, we shall be the more awed with the depth and breadth of that impress of justice which marks the character and the government of God. Say that this punishment is that of loss, loss of the presence and friendship of God, and all the advantages which must result from that immediate intercourse with him which is promised to righteous persons; and that this loss, which, confessedly, must be unspeakably great, is eternal; even then it must follow, that the turpitude of moral delinquency is regarded by our divine Legislator and Judge as exceedingly aggravated. But when, to the punishment of loss in a future life, we add that of pain, which all the representations of this subject in Scripture certainly establish, whether they are held to be expressed in literal or in figurative phrase; to which pain also the all-impressive circumstance of eternity is to be added; then is our sense of the guilt and merit of human offence against God, according to the principles of the divine law, raised, if not to a full conception of the evil of sin, (for as we cannot measure the punishment, we cannot measure the quality of the offence,) yet to a height which may well warrant the scriptural exclamation, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

These premises are unquestionable, if any respect is paid to the authority of Scripture; and, indeed, God's severity against moral offence is manifested, in this present life, by facts of universal observation and uninterrupted history, quite independent of Scripture. But it is to the testimony of God himself, in his own word, that we must resort for the most important illustrations of the divine character, and especially of its holiness and justice.

With respect to the former, they show us that holiness in God is more than a mere absence of moral evil; more than approval, and even delight in, moral goodness; more than simple aversion and displeasure at what is contrary to it.



They prove, that the holiness of God is so intense, that whatever is opposed to it is the object of an active displacence, of hatred, of opposition and resistance; and that these sentiments are inflexible and eternal. Agreeably to this, God is, in Scripture, said to be “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” and we are there taught that “the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination” to him.

With respect to the justice of God, it is necessary that we should speak more at large, since a right conception of that attribute of the divine nature lies at the foundation of the Christian doctrine of atonement.

Justice is usually considered as universal or particular. Universal justice, or righteousness, includes holiness; and, indeed, all the moral attributes of God,—all the divine virtues of every kind. Particular justice is either commutative, which respects equals; or distributive, which is the dispensing of rewards and punishments, and is exercised only by governors. It is the justice of God in this last view, but still in connexion with universal justice, with which we are now concerned; that rectoral sovereign justice, by which he maintains his own rights, and the rights of others, and gives to every one his due, according to that legal constitution which he has himself established. And as this legal constitution, under which he has placed his creatures, is the result of universal righteousness, or the holiness, goodness, truth, and wisdom of God united; so his distributive justice, in carrying into effect the laws which he has himself established, is, in every respect and degree, faultless and perfect. For in this legal constitution, no rights are mistaken or mis-stated; and nothing is enjoined or prohibited, nothing promised or threatened, but what is exactly conformable to the universal righteousness or absolute moral perfection of God. This is the constant doctrine of Scripture; this the uniform praise bestowed upon the divine law, that it is, in every respect, conformable to abstract truth, purity, holiness, and justice. “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous

altogether." (Psalm xix. 8, 9.) "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Rom. vii. 12.)

Of the strictness and severity of the punitive justice of God, the sentence of death, which, we have already seen, was pronounced upon sin, and therefore upon all transgressions of God's law, (for "sin is the transgression of the law,") is sufficient evidence; and the actual infliction of death, as to the body, is a standing proof to the world, that the threatening is not a dead letter, and that in the divine administration continual and strict regard is had to the claims and dispensations of distributive justice. On the other hand, as this administration emanates from the entire holiness and moral rectitude of the divine nature, it is established by this circumstance,—that its severity does not go beyond the equity of the case; and that, even in that full extent of punishment which may be inflicted in another life, and which is therefore eternal, there is nothing which is contrary to the full and complete moral perfection of God, to his goodness, holiness, truth, and justice united; but that it is fully agreeable to them all, and is, indeed, the result of the perfect existence of such attributes in the divine nature.

The Scriptures, therefore, are exceedingly emphatic in ascribing a perfect righteousness to the judicial and penal visitations of sinful individuals and nations; and that not merely with reference to such visitations as execute the penalties threatened in the divine law itself, (in which case their righteousness would consist in their not exceeding the penalty threatened,) but, more abstractedly considered, in their very nature, and with reference to even the highest standard of righteousness and holiness. "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?" "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." (2 Thess. i. 6.) "The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. ii. 5.) "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." (Rev. xvi. 7.)

The legal constitution, then, which we are under, secures life to the obedient, but dooms offenders to die: It is the



office of distributive justice to execute this penalty, as well as to bestow the reward of obedience ; and the appointment of the penalty, and the execution of it, are both the results of the essential rectitude of God.

Of this as the doctrine of Scripture there can be no doubt ; but have we any means of discerning the connexion between the essential justice or universal righteousness of God, and such a constitution of law and government as, in the first instance, ordains so severe a penalty against sin as death ; maintains it unchangeably through all the generations of time ; and carries it into eternity ? This is an important question, not without its difficulties ; and yet it may not altogether elude our inquiries. Whether we succeed or not in discovering this connexion, the fact remains the same, firmly grounded on the most explicit testimony of God in his own word. It is, however, an inquiry worthy of our attention.

The creation of beings capable of choice, and endowed with affections, seems necessarily to have involved the possibility of their volitions and acts being contrary to the will of the Creator. To prevent this, both justice and benevolence were concerned. Justice,—seeing that the Creator has an absolute right to the entire obedience of the creatures he has made, and all opposition to that will is the violation of a right, and the practice of a wrong, which justice is bound to prevent. Benevolence,—because this opposition to the will of God, which will is the natural law of a creature, must be the source of misery to the offender, and that independent of direct punishment. This is manifest. Some end was proposed in creation, or it could not have been a work of wisdom ; the felicity of the intelligent creature must also have been proposed as an end, either principal or subordinate, or creation could not have been a display of goodness ; a capacity and power of holiness must also have been imparted to moral agents, or every act would have been morally corrupt, and, therefore, the creature must have been constantly displeasing to the holy God, and not “very good,” as all his works, including man, were pronounced to be at the beginning. The end proposed in the forming of intelligent creatures could only

be answered by their continual compliance with the will of God. This implied both the power and the exercise of holiness; and with that the felicity of the creature was necessarily connected. It was adapted to a certain end; and, in attaining that, its happiness was secured. To be disobedient was to set itself in opposition to God, to exist and act for ends contrary to the wisdom and holiness of God; and was, therefore, to frustrate his benevolent intentions also as to its happiness, and to become miserable from its very hostility to God, and the disorder arising from the misapplication of the powers with which it had been endowed. To prevent all these evils, and to secure the purposes for which creative power was exerted, were the ends, therefore, of that administration which arose out of the existence of moral agents. This rule takes date from their earliest being. No sooner did they exist, than a divine government was established over them; and to the ends just mentioned all its acts must have been directed.

The first act was the publication of the will or law of God; for where there is no declared law, there is no rational government. The second act was to give motives to obedience; for to creatures liable to evil, though created good, these were necessary; but, as they were made free, and designed to yield a willing service, more than motives (that is, rational inducements, operating through the judgment and affections) could not be applied to induce obedience;—external force or necessary impulse could have no place in the government of such creatures. The promise of the continuance of a happy and still improving life comprehended one class of motives to obedience; the real justice of yielding obedience, another. But was no motive arising from fear also to be applied? There was much to be feared from the very nature of things; from the misery which, in the way of natural and necessary consequence alone, must follow from opposition to the will of God, and the wilful corrupting of a nature created upright. Now, since this was what the creature was liable to, the administration of the divine government would have been obviously defective, had this been concealed by Him, who had himself established that natural order by which disobedience to the

will of God, in a moral being, should be followed by certain misery; and he would apparently have been chargeable with not having used every means, consistent with free agency, to prevent so fatal a result. So far, we conceive, this is indubitable.

But now let us suppose that nothing less than a positive penalty, of the most tremendous kind, could be a sufficient motive to deter these free and rational beings from transgression; that, even that threatened penalty itself, though the greatest possible evil, would not, in all cases, be sufficient; but that, in none, a less powerful motive would prove sufficiently cautionary;—then, in such circumstances, the moral perfection of the divine nature, his universal rectitude and benevolence, would, undoubtedly, require the ordination of that penalty, however tremendous. The case might be a choice between the universal disobedience of all, and their being left to the miseries which follow from sin by natural consequence; and the preservation of some, perhaps the majority,—though the guilty remainder should not only be punished by the misery which is the natural result of vice, but, in addition, should be subject to that positive penalty of death, which, as to the soul, runs on with immortality, and is therefore eternal.

On such an alternative as this, which may surely be conceived possible, and which contradicts no attribute of God, does the essential justice or rectitude of the divine nature demand that such a penalty should be adopted? The affirmative of this question will be supported, I think, by the following considerations:—

1. The holiness of God, which, as we have seen, is so intense as to abhor and detest every kind and degree of moral evil, would, from its very nature, its active and irreconcilable opposition to evil, determine him to the adoption of the most effectual means of preventing its introduction among the rational beings which should be created, and, when introduced, of checking and limiting its progress. So that, in proportion to that aversion, must be his propension to adopt the most effectual means to deter his creatures from it; and if nothing



less than such a penalty could be effectual, even in the majority of cases, then it resulted necessarily, from the holiness of God, that the penalty of death, in all its scriptural extent, should be attached to transgression.

2. The consideration of the essential justice or rectitude of God, that principle which leads to an unchangeable respect to what is right and equitably fit, leads to the same conclusion. God has his own rights as Maker, and therefore Proprietor and Lord, of all creatures ; and it is fit they should be maintained and vindicated. To surrender them, or unsteadily and uncertainly to assert them, would be an encouragement to evil ; and his very regard to mere abstract right and moral fitness must therefore be considered as determining God to a steady and unchangeable assertion of his rights, since their surrender could present no end worthy of his character, nor be consistent with his holiness. But wherever more created beings exist than one, the rights of others also come into consideration ; both the indirect right of an imperfect creature to be protected, as far as may be, from the contagion of bad example, and the more direct right of protection from those injuries which many sins do, in their own nature, imply ; for no man can be ambitious, unjust, &c., without inflicting injury upon others. The essential rectitude of God was concerned, therefore, to regard such rights in the creatures dependent upon him, and to adopt such a legal constitution and mode of government, under which to place them, as should respect the maintenance of his own rights of sovereignty, and the righteous claims which his creatures, that is, the general society of created beings, had upon him. All this, it may be said, only proves that the essential rectitude of God required that such a government should be adopted as should inflict some marked penalty on offences. It proves this, but it proves also that the divine rectitude required that the most effectual means should be adopted to uphold these rights, both as they existed primarily in God, and secondarily in his creatures. This must follow ; for if there was any obligation to uphold them at all, it was an obligation to uphold them in the most effectual manner, since, if ineffectual means only had been adopted, when more

effectual means were at command, a wilful abandonment of those rights would have been implied. If, therefore, there were no means equally effectual for these purposes as the issuing of a law which should have the sanction of death as its penalty, the essential rectitude of God required its adoption.

3. The same may be said of the divine goodness and wisdom; for, as the former is tenderly disposed to preserve all sentient creatures from misery, so the latter would, of necessity, adopt the most effectual means of counteracting moral evil, which is the only source of misery in the creation of God.

The whole question, then, depends on this, whether the penalty of death, as the punishment of sin, be the most effectual means of accomplishing this end; the answer to which, as to all who believe the Bible, is, that as this has actually been adopted as the penalty of transgressing the divine law, (see chapter xviii.,) and is confessedly the highest possible penalty which can be enacted, nothing less could be effectual for the purposes of government, and for the manifestation of the divine rectitude. For, if so, then a superfluous and excessive means has been adopted, for which no reason can be given, and which impeaches the wisdom of God,—an attribute whose office it is to adapt means to ends by an exact adjustment; if not, then it was required by all the moral attributes of the divine nature to which we have referred.

The next question will be, whether, since, as the result of the moral perfection of God, a legal constitution has been established among rational creatures which promises life to obedience, and denounces death against transgression, the justice of God obliges to the execution of the penalty; or whether we have any reason to conclude, that the rights of God are, in many or in all cases, relaxed, and punishment remitted. All the opponents of the doctrine of atonement strenuously insist upon this; and argue, first, that God has an unquestionable power of giving up his own rights, and pardoning sin on prerogative, without any compensation whatever. Second, that, when repentance succeeds to offence, there is a moral fitness in

forgiveness, since the person offending presents an altered and reformed character : And, finally, that the very affections of goodness and mercy, so eminent in the divine character, require us to conclude that he is always ready, upon repentance, to forgive the delinquencies of all his creatures, or, at most, to make their punishments light and temporary.

In the first of these arguments, it is contended that God may give up his own rights. This must mean either his right to obedience from his creatures ; or his right to punish disobedience, when that occurs. With respect to God's right to be obeyed, nothing can be more obvious than that the perfect rectitude of his nature forbids him to give up that right, or to relax it at all. No King can morally give up his right to be obeyed in the full degree which may be enjoined by the laws of his kingdom. No parent can give up his right to obedience, in things lawful, from his children, and be blameless. In either case, if this be done voluntarily, it argues an indifference to that principle of rectitude on which such duties depend, and, therefore, a moral imperfection. This cannot be attributed to God, and therefore he never can yield up his right to be obeyed ; which is both agreeable to abstract rectitude, and is, moreover, for the benefit of the creature himself, as the contrary would be necessarily injurious to him. But may he not give up his right to punish, when disobedience has actually taken place ? Only, it is manifest, where he would not appear by this to give up his claim to obedience, which would be a winking at offence ; and where he has not absolutely bound himself to punish. But neither of these can occur here. It is only by punitive acts that the supreme Governor makes it certain that he stands upon his right to be obeyed, and that he will not relax it. If no punishment ensue, then it must follow, that that right is given up. From the same principle that past offences are regarded with impunity, it would also follow, that all future ones might be overlooked in like manner ; and thus government would be abrogated, and the obligation of subjection to God be, in effect, cancelled. If, again, impunity were confined to a few offenders, then would there be partiality in God ; if it were extended to all, then would he



renounce his sovereignty, and show himself indifferent to that love of rectitude which is the characteristic of a holy Being, and to that moral order which is the character of a righteous Governor. But, in addition to this, we have already seen that, by a formal law, punishment is actually threatened, and that in the extreme, and in all cases of transgression whatever. Now, from this it follows, that nothing less than the attachment of such a penalty to transgression was determined, by the wisdom of God, to be sufficient to uphold the authority of his laws among his creatures; that even this security, in all instances, would not deter them from sin; and, therefore, that a less awful sanction would have been wholly inadequate to the case. If so, then not to exact the penalty is to repeal the law, to reduce its sanction to an empty threat unworthy the veracity of God, and to render it altogether inert, inasmuch as it would be soon discovered whether sin were followed by punishment or not. This is a principle so fully recognised in human Governments, that their laws have generally defined the measure of punishment; and, the fact being proved, the punishment follows as a thing of course in the regular order of administration. It is true, that a power of pardon is generally lodged with the Prince; but the reason of this is the imperfection which must necessarily cleave to all human institutions, so that there may be circumstances in the offence which the law could not provide against, or there may be an expediency or reason of state which supposes some compromise of strict principle, some weakness on the part of the sovereign power, some desire to disarm resentment, or to obtain popularity, or to gratify some powerful interest. But these are the exceptions, not the rule; for, in general, the supreme power proceeds calmly and firmly in the exercise of punitive justice, in order to maintain the authority of the laws, and to deter others from offending. Now, none of these imperfections, or sinister interests, which interfere to produce these exceptions, can have any place in the divine government; and, even if it could be proved, that, in some special cases, exceptions might occur in the administration of God, yet this would not assist the argument of those who would establish the hope of pardon,

in behalf of offending men, upon the prerogative of God to relax his own rights and to remit punishment, since the thing required is to prove that prerogative is a general rule of pardon, not the ground of a few special cases of exemption only, from the denounced penalty. It may therefore be confidently concluded, that there is no relaxation of right in the divine administration, and no forgiveness of sin by the exercise of mere prerogative.

The notion which has been added to this, that repentance, on the part of the offender, places him in a new relation, and renders him a fit object of pardon, will be found equally fallacious.

This argument supposes that, where impenitence continues, that moral fitness which is supposed to present itself in the case of penitents, to warrant the exercise of forgiveness, does not exist; and, therefore, that it would be morally unfit, that is, wrong, to exercise it. This is, indeed, expressly conceded by Socinus, who says, that not to pardon, in case of impenitence, is due to the rectitude and equity of God.\* It follows, then, that the principle before stated, namely, that the prerogative of God entitles him to forgive sin, must be given up by all who hold that only when repentance takes place a moral fitness is created for the exercise of this act of grace. Upon their own showing, sin is not, and cannot, consistently with rectitude, be forgiven by a voluntary surrender of right, or from mere compassion; but in order to make it an act of moral fitness, that is, a right and proper proceeding, some consideration must be presented, independent of the misery to which the offender has exposed himself, and which misery is the object of pity; something which shall make it right, as well as merciful, in God to forgive. Those who urge that repentance is this consideration, do thus, unwittingly, give up their own principle, and tacitly adopt that of the satisfactionists, differing only as to what does actually constitute it

\* *Non resipiscen'tibus veniam non concedere, id demum naturæ divinæ, et decretis ejus, et propterea rectitudinî, et æquitatî debitum est ac consentaneum.*  
—SOCINUS, *De Servat.*

right in God to forgive. But the sufficiency of mere repentance to constitute a moral fitness in forgiveness, those who consider the death of Christ as a necessary atonement for sin, deny ; and there are, indeed, many considerations suggested to us by turning to our true guide, the Scriptures, wholly unfavourable to this opinion.

1. In the first place, we find no intimation in them that the penalty of the law is not to be executed in case of repentance : Certainly there was none given in the promulgation of the law to Adam ; there is none in the Decalogue ; none in any of those passages in the Old and New Testament which, speaking of the legal consequences of sin, declare that “ the wages of sin is death ;” and “ the soul that sinneth it shall die,” &c. Repentance, it is true, is enjoined, both in the Old and New Testaments, but then it is in connexion with a system of atonement and satisfaction ; with sacrifices under the Mosaic institution, and with the vicarious death of Christ under the new covenant. In both, something more is referred to, as the means of human recovery, than repentance ; and of that, indeed, repentance itself is represented as an effect and fruit. Wherever the divine Being and his creatures are regarded simply in their legal relation, one as the Governor, the other as his subjects, there is certainly no such qualification of the threatenings of his violated law as to warrant any one to expect remission of punishment upon repentance.

2. It is not true, that repentance changes, as they urge, the legal relation of the guilty to God whom they have offended. They are offenders still, though penitent. The sentence of the law is directed against transgression ; and repentance does not annihilate, but, on the contrary, acknowledges the fact of that transgression. The charge lies against the offender ; he may be an obdurate or a penitent criminal ; but, in either case, he is equally guilty of all for which he stands truly charged, and how then can his relation to the Lawgiver be changed by repentance ? In the nature of the thing, nothing but pardon can change that relation ; for nothing but pardon can cancel crime ; and it is clear that repentance is not pardon.



3. So far from repentance producing this change of relation, and placing men in the same situation as though they had never offended, we have proofs to the contrary, both from the Scriptures and from the established course of providence. For the first : Though men are now under a dispensation of grace, yet, after long-continued obstinacy and refusal of grace, the Scriptures represent repentance as incapable of turning away the coming vengeance : “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; —when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you ; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” Here, to call upon God, and to seek him early, that is, earnestly and carefully, are acts of repentance and reformation too, and yet they have no effect in changing the relation of the guilty to God, their Judge ; they are proceeded against for their past offences, which, according to the theory of the Socinians, they ought not to be.

The course of providence in this life is, also, in opposition to the notion of the efficacy of mere repentance to arrest punishment. For, as Bishop Butler has so well shown,\* the sufferings which follow sin in this present life by natural consequence, and the established constitution of things, are as much the effect of God’s appointment as the direct penalties attached by him to the violation of his laws ; and though they may differ in degree, that does not affect the question. Whether the punishment be of long or of short duration, inflicted in the present state or in the next, if the justice or benevolence of God requires that punishment should not be inflicted, when repentance has taken place, it cannot be inflicted consistently with those attributes in any degree whatever. But repentance does not prevent these penal consequences ; it does not restore health injured by intemperance, property wasted by profusion, or character dishonoured by an evil practice. The moral administration under which we are, therefore, shows that

\* Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion.

indemnity is not necessarily the effect of repentance in the present life ; and we have, consequently, no reason to conclude that it will be so in another.

4. The true nature of repentance, as it is stated in the Scriptures, seems entirely to have been overlooked or disregarded by those who contend that repentance is a reason for the non-execution of the penalty of the law. It is either a sorrow for sin, merely because of the painful consequences to which it has exposed the offender, unless forgiven ; or it arises from a perception also of the evil of sin, and a dislike to it as such, with real remorse and sorrow that the authority of God has been slighted, and his goodness abused. Now, if by "repentance" is meant repentance in the former sense, then, to give pardon on such a condition would be tantamount to the entire and absolute repeal of all law, and the annihilation of all government, since every criminal, when convicted, and finding himself in immediate danger of punishment, would as necessarily repent as he would necessarily be sorry to be liable to pain ; and this sorrow being repentance, it would, in all cases, according to this doctrine, render it morally fit and right that forgiveness should be exercised, and, consequently, wrong that it should be refused. In no instance, therefore, could the penalty of the law be enforced.

But if repentance be taken in the second sense, and this is certainly the light in which true repentance is exhibited in the Scriptures, then it is forgotten that such is the corrupt state of man, that he is incapable of penitence of this kind. This follows from that view of human depravity which we have already established from the Scriptures, and which we need not repeat. In conformity with this doctrine of the entire corruptness of man's nature, repentance is said to be from Christ, who, in consequence of being exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, gives repentance as well as remission of sins ; a gift quite superfluous, if to repent truly were in the power of man, and independent of Christ. To suppose man to be capable of a repentance which is the result of genuine principle, is to assume human nature to be what it is not ; if man be totally corrupt, the only principles from which that repent-

ance and correction of manners, which are supposed in the argument, can flow, do not exist in his nature.

But take it that repentance, in its best interpretation, is possible to fallen unassisted man, and that it is actually exercised and followed by a better conduct, still in no good sense can it be shown, that this would make it morally right and fit in the supreme Being to forgive offences against his government. Socinus, as we have seen in the above quotation, allows that it would not be right, not consistent with God's moral attributes, to forgive the impenitent ; and all, indeed, who urge repentance as the sole condition of pardon, adopt the same principle ; but how, then, does it appear, that to grant pardon upon repentance is right, that is, just in itself, or a manifestation of a just and righteous government ?

If “right” be taken in the sense of moral fitness, its lowest sense, the moral correspondence of one thing with another, it cannot be morally fit in a perfectly holy Being to be so indifferent to offences, as not to express, towards the offenders, any practical displeasure of any kind ; yet this the argument supposes, since the slightest infliction of punishment, should repentance take place, would be contrary to the principle assumed. If justice be taken in the sense of giving to every one what is due, the divine Being cannot, in this sense, be just should he treat an offender, though afterwards penitent, precisely as he treats those who have persevered in obedience, without defect of any kind ; and yet, if repentance be pleaded as a moral reason for entirely overlooking offence, then will all be treated alike, whether obedient or the contrary. But, finally, if the justice of God be considered with reference to his government, the impossibility of exonerating a penitent offender, and of upholding, at the same time, a righteous administration, is most apparent. That we are under government, is certain ; that we are under a settled law, is equally so ; and that law explains to us the nature of the government by which we are controlled. In all the statements made respecting this government in Scripture, the rule of earthly Sovereigns and Magistrates is the shadow under which it is represented ; and the one is the perfect model after which the other has



been imperfectly framed. Nothing that is said of God being a Father, is ever adduced to lower his claims as Lord, or to diminish the reverence and fear of his creatures towards him under that character. The penalty of transgression is death. This is too plainly written in the Scriptures to be for a moment denied; and if it were righteous to attach that penalty to offence, it is most certainly righteous to execute it; and, therefore, administrative justice cannot be maintained if it be not executed. As to the impenitent, this, indeed, is conceded. But penitence makes no difference; for, if the end proposed in attaching this penalty to offence was to maintain the authority of the law, then not to execute it upon the repentant would still be to annul that authority. The repentance spoken of is either in the power of the transgressor, or it is not. If the former, he will always be disposed to exercise it, when the danger approaches, rather than die; and so he may sin as often as he pleases, and yet have it always in his own power to turn aside the punishment; which amounts to a substantive repeal of the law, and the abrogation of all government. If, on the other hand, the production of a penitent disposition is not in his own power, and can only come from above, as a matter of grace, it is a strange anomaly to suppose a government so established as to oblige the Governor to concur in producing repentance in those who despise his authority, so that they may avoid punishment. This would be grace, and not law, most emphatically; for, if the Governor were bound by any principle of any kind to produce this sentiment of repentance, in order to constitute a moral fitness in the exercise of pardon, he would, for any thing we can see, be bound by it to use the same means to render all penitent, that all might escape punishment, and to do this, too, as often as they fell into sin, that punishment might, in no case, follow, except when the means employed by him for that purpose were obstinately resisted; and thus repentance would be brought in as the substitute of obedience. But since the end of law is to secure obedience, and it is invested with authority for the purpose of effecting that end, it ceases to answer the purpose for which it was established when it accepts repentance in the

place of obedience. This is not its end, as an instrument of moral government ; nor is it a means to its proper end, which is obedience. For repentance can give no security for future obedience, since a penitent transgressor, whose nature is infected with a corrupt moral principle and habit, is much more liable to sin again than when in the innocence of his first estate ; and, as this scheme makes no provision at all for the moral cure of man's fallen nature by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, so it abolishes all law as an instrument of moral order, and substitutes pardon as an end of government instead of obedience.

With this view of the insufficiency of repentance to obtain pardon the Scripture agrees ; for, not now to advert to the doctrine of the Old Testament, which will be subsequently considered, we need only refer to the Gospel, which is professedly a declaration of the mercy of God to sinning men, and which also professedly lays down the means by which the pardon of their offences is to be attained. Without entering at all into other subjects connected with this, it is enough here to show that, in the Gospel, pardon is not connected with mere repentance, as it must have been had the doctrine against which we have contended been true. John the Baptist was, emphatically, a Preacher of repentance ; and, had nothing but mere repentance been required in order to salvation, he would have been the most successful of Preachers. So numerous were the multitudes which submitted to the influence of his ministry, that the largest terms are used by the Evangelist Matthew to express the effect produced by it : "Then went out all Judea, and all Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Of the truth of their repentance, no doubt is expressed. On the contrary, when John excepts only "many of the Sadducees and Pharisees," who came "to his baptism," as hypocrites, we are bound to conclude, that he, who appears to have had the supernatural gift of discovering the spirits of men, allowed the repentance of the others generally to be genuine. It would follow, then, from the principle laid down by the adversaries of the doctrine of the atonement of Christ,

namely, that repentance alone renders it morally fit in God to forgive sin, and that, therefore, he can require nothing else but true repentance in order to pardon, that the disciples of the Baptist need not to have looked for any thing beyond what their master was the instrument of imparting by his ministry. But this is contradicted by the fact. He taught them to look for a higher baptism,—that of the Holy Ghost ; and to a more effectual Teacher, the Christ, whose voice or herald he was. All he did and said bore upon it a preparatory character ; and to this character he was most careful to give the utmost distinctness, that his hearers might not be mistaken. To two of his disciples, standing with him when “ he looked upon Jesus as he walked,” he said, “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ;” and thus he confessed that it was not himself, nor his doctrine, nor the repentance which it produced, that took away sin ; but that it was taken away by Christ alone, and that in his sacrificial character as “ the Lamb of God.” Nay, what, indeed, is still more explicit, he himself declares that everlasting life was not attained by the repentance which he preached, but by believing on Christ ; for he concludes his discourse concerning Jesus (John iii. 25—36) with these memorable words : “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” The testimony of John was, therefore, that more than repentance, even faith in Christ, was necessary to salvation. Such, also, was the doctrine of our Lord himself, though he, too, was a Preacher of repentance ; and that of the Apostles, who, proclaiming that all men every where should repent, not less explicitly preached that all men every where should believe ; and that men were “ justified by faith only,” and thus had “ peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## CHAPTER XX.

### *Redemption :—Death of Christ propitiatory.*

THESE two points, then, being so fully established,—that sin is neither forgiven by the mere prerogative of God, nor upon the account of mere repentance in man,—we proceed to inquire into the Scripture account of the real consideration on which the execution of the penalty of transgression is delayed, and the offer of forgiveness is made to offenders.

To the statements of the New Testament we shall first direct our attention, and then point out the harmony of doctrine on this subject which pervades the whole Scriptures, and makes both the Old and New Testament give consenting testimony to that one method of love, wisdom, and justice, by which a compassionate God justifies the ungodly.

1. The first thing which strikes every attentive, and, indeed, every cursory reader of the New Testament, must be, that the pardon of our sin, and our entire salvation, are ascribed to the death of Christ. We do not now inquire in what sense his death availed to these great results; but we, at present, only state, that, in some sense, our salvation is expressly and emphatically connected with that event. “I lay down my life for the sheep.” “He gave himself for us.” He died, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins.” “He gave his life a ransom for many.” “We who were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;” with innumerable other passages, in which, with equal emphasis, the salvation of man is connected with the death of Christ.



This is so undeniable, that it is, to a certain extent, acknowledged in the two great schemes opposed to the doctrine received generally by the church of Christ, which in all ages has held that the death of Christ was an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, and necessary to render the gift of pardon consistent with the essential righteousness and the righteous government of God. The Socinian scheme admits that the death of Christ was important to confirm his doctrine, and to bring on his resurrection, the crowning miracle by which its truth was to be demonstrated. It admits, too, that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, "because we are led, by the due consideration of Christ's death and its consequences, to that repentance, which, under the merciful constitution of the divine government, always obtains forgiveness." The second scheme, which is that of the Arians, goes farther: It represents the coming of Christ, whom they consider to be the most exalted of the creatures of God, into the world, and his labours and sufferings in behalf of men, as acts of the most disinterested and tender benevolence, in reward and honour of which he is allowed to bestow pardon upon his disciples upon their sincere repentance, and to plead his interest with God, who delights to honour the generous conduct of his Son towards the human race. His voluntary sufferings and death for the sins of mankind, according to them, gave great efficacy to his intercession with God, and thus, by his mediation, sinners are reconciled to God, and raised to eternal life.

Far as even the latter of these theories falls below the sense of Scripture on this subject, yet both of them are, in this respect, important,—that they concede that the death of Christ, as the means of human salvation, is made so prominent in the New Testament that it cannot be left out of our consideration when the doctrine of man's salvation is treated of; and also, that there is a doctrine of the Holy Scriptures on this subject which must, in some way or other, be accounted for and explained. The Socinian accounts for it by making the death of Christ the means by which repentance is produced in the heart of man, so as to constitute it morally fit that he should

be forgiven. The modern Arian connects with this notion that kind of merit in the death of Christ which arises from a generous and benevolent self-devotion; and which, when pleaded by him in the way of mediation, God is pleased to honour by accepting repentance in place of perfect obedience whenever it is produced, and is accompanied with purposes of amendment.

2. But the views given us of the death of Christ, by the writers of the New Testament, go much further than these, because they represent the death of Christ as necessary to the salvation of men,—a principle which both the hypotheses just mentioned wholly exclude. The reason of forgiveness is placed by one in repentance merely; by the other in the exercise of the right which God had to pardon, but which he chose to exercise in honour of the philanthropy of Jesus Christ. Both make the death of Christ, though in a different way, and in a very subordinate sense, the means of obtaining pardon, because it is a means of bringing men into a state in which they are fit objects for the exercise of an act of grace; but the Scripture doctrine is, that the death of Christ is not the meritorious means, but the meritorious cause, of the exercise of forgiveness; and that repentance is but one of the instrumental means of actually obtaining it: And, in consistency with this view, they speak of the death of Christ, not as one of many means, by which the same end might have been accomplished, but in the strictest sense as necessary to man's salvation.

This has, indeed, been considered, even by some Divines professing orthodoxy, as a bold position, but with little consistency on their part. It follows, of course, from the Socinian and Arian hypotheses, that if our Lord were a man, or an angelic creature; and if he were rather the mere messenger of a mercy which might be exercised on prerogative, than the procuring cause of it; any other creature beside himself might have conveyed the message of this mercy; might have exhibited a generous devotion in our behalf; and been an effectual instrument to bring men to that repentance which would prepare them to receive it. But when it is admitted, that Christ



was the divine Son of God ; that he was “God manifest in the flesh ;” that the forgiveness of sin required a satisfaction to divine justice of so noble and infinitely exalted a kind as that which was offered by the sufferings and death of the incarnate Deity ; even from such premises alone it would seem necessarily to follow, that, but for the interposition of Christ, sin could not have been forgiven consistently with a perfectly righteous government, and, therefore, not forgiven at all, unless a sacrifice of equal merit, which supposes a being of equal glory and dignity as its subject, could have been found. If no such being existed out of the Godhead, then human hope rested solely on the voluntary incarnation of the Son of God ; and the overwhelming fact and mystery of his becoming flesh, in order to suffer for us, itself shows, that the case to be remedied was one of a character absolutely extreme, and, therefore, not otherwise remediable. If inferior means had been sufficient, then more was done by the Father, when he delivered up his Son for us, than was necessary,—a conclusion of an impious character : And if the greatest possible gift was bestowed, then nothing less could have been effectual, and the death of Christ was necessary to human salvation. Every believer in the Divinity of Christ is bound to this conclusion.

This matter is, however, put beyond all reasonable question by the testimony of Scripture : “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.” Here a necessity for the death of Christ is plainly expressed. If it be said, that the necessity was the fulfilment of what had been written in the Prophets concerning the sufferings of Messiah, it is to be remembered, that what was predicted on this subject by the Prophets arose out of a previous appointment of God, in whose eternal counsel Christ had been designated as the Redeemer of man ; and that the sole end and reason of the death of Christ could not, therefore, be the mere fulfilment of the prophecies respecting him. The verse which follows abundantly proves this : “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.” (Luke xxiv. 47.) His death was not only necessary for the accomplishment of

prophecy, but for the publication of “repentance and remission of sins in his name ;” both of which, therefore, depended upon it. It was God’s purpose to offer forgiveness to man, before the Prophets issued their predictions ; it was his purpose to do this “in his name,” on account of and in consideration of his dying for them : This was predicted ; but the necessity of the death of Christ rested on that previous appointment to which the prophecies corresponded. In Matthew xvi. 21, the same sentiment is expressed without any reference to the fulfilment of prophecy : “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” The answer, too, of our Lord to Peter, who, upon this declaration, said, “Be it far from thee, Lord : This shall not be unto thee,” is remarkable. “But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence to me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” These words plainly imply, that for Christ to suffer and die in this manner, and not to accomplish the purpose of his coming into the world according to the carnal and human views of Peter, was “of God ;” it was his purpose, his appointment. This is not language to be used of a martyr dying to prove his sincerity ; for death, in such cases, is rather permitted than purposed and appointed ; and it would be to adopt language never applied to such cases in the holy Scriptures, to say that the sufferings and deaths of martyrs are “of God.” The necessity of Christ’s death, then, rested on divine appointment, and that on the necessity of the case ; and if he “must” die, in order that we might live, then we live only in consequence of his death.

The same view is conveyed by a strongly figurative expression in John xii. 23, 24 : “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” From which it inevitably follows, that the death of Christ was as necessary to human salvation

as the vegetable death of the seed of corn is necessary to the production of the harvest ; necessary, therefore, in this sense, —that one could not take place without the other. But for this, he would have remained “alone,” and have brought no “sons to glory.”

In a word, all those passages of Scripture which speak of our salvation from death and misery by the sufferings of Christ, and call upon our gratitude on this account, are founded upon the same doctrine. These are too numerous to be cited, and are sufficiently familiar. “We have redemption through his blood ;” “We are saved from wrath through him,” &c. Such forms of speech are continually occurring, and the highest ascriptions of praise are given to the Father and to the Son on this account. Yet, most clearly, they all suppose, that “wrath,” and “death,” but for this interposition of the passion of Christ on our account, would have been the doom of sinning men. They contain not the most distant intimation that, had he not come into the world “to seek and to save them that were lost,” they would have been saved by any other means ; that, had not he, the good Shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep, they would have been brought by some other process into the heavenly fold. The very emphasis of the expression, “lost,” implies a desperate case ; for as lost they could not have been described, if pardon had been offered them on mere repentance ; and if the death of Christ had been one only of many means, through some of which that disposition in God to forgive offenders must have operated, which is the doctrine of all who set up the goodness of the divine government against its justice. In that case, mankind could not have been in a hopeless state, independent of Christ’s redemption,—the view which is uniformly taken of their case in Scripture, where the death of Christ is exhibited, not as one expedient of many, but as the only hope of the guilty.

3. The Scriptures, in speaking of the death of Christ, inform us that he died “for us,” that is, in our room and stead. With this representation neither of the hypotheses to which we have adverted, as attempting to account for the importance attached to the death of our Lord in the New



Testament, agrees ; and therefore both of them fall far below the whole truth of the case. The Socinian scheme makes the death of Christ only an incidental benefit, by sealing the truth of his doctrine, and by setting an example of eminent passive virtue. In this sense, indeed, they acknowledge that he died “for” men, because in this indirect manner they derive the benefit of instruction from his death, and because some of the motives to virtue are placed in a stronger light. The modern Arian scheme, sometimes called the “intercession hypothesis,” acknowledges that he acquired, by his disinterested and generous sufferings, the highest degree of virtue, and a powerful interest with God, by which his intercession on behalf of penitent offenders is honoured by an exercise of higher mercy than would otherwise have taken place ; but it by no means follows from this, that repentance might not otherwise have taken place, and mercy have been otherwise exercised. According to this view, then, Christ died for the benefit, indeed, of men, somewhat more directly than on the Socinian scheme ; but he did not die for them in the sense of the Scriptures, that is, in their room and stead ; his death was not vicarious, and it is not on that account, directly, that the guilty are absolved from condemnation.

To prove that our Lord died “for” men, in the sense of dying in their stead, the testimony of the sacred writers must, however, be adduced ; and it is equally abundant and explicit. St. Peter says, he died “the just for the unjust,” that “he suffered for us ;” St. Paul, that “he died for all,” that “he tasted death for every man,” that he died “for the ungodly,” that “he gave himself a ransom for all ;” and our Lord himself, “that he gave himself a ransom for many.” To show, however, that this phrase means no more than a final cause, and that the only notion intended to be conveyed is, that Christ died for our benefit, it is argued, by the objectors, that the Greek prepositions *υπερ* and *αντι*, used in the above quotations, do not always signify “substitution ;” but are sometimes to be rendered “on account of,” as when Christ is said to have “suffered for our sins,” which cannot be rendered “instead of our sins.” All this may, indeed, be granted ; but then it



is as certain that these prepositions do often signify "substitution;" and that the Greeks, by these forms of expression, were wont to denote a vicarious death, is abundantly proved by the examples given by Raphelius on Romans v. 8. Nor are instances wanting of texts in which these particles can only be interpreted in the sense of "instead of," and "in the place of." So, in the speech of Caiaphas, "It is expedient that one man should die *υπερ*, for the people, and that the whole nation perish not;" he plainly declares, that either Christ or the nation must perish; and that, by putting the former to death, he would die "instead of" the nation. In Romans v. 6, 8, the sense in which Christ "died for us," is indubitably fixed by the context: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" on which passage Doddridge has observed, "One can hardly imagine any one would die for a good man, unless it were to redeem his life by giving up his own." In this sense also *αντι* is used by the LXX., 2 Samuel xviii. 33, where David says, concerning Absalom, "Would to God I had died *αντι σου*, for thee!" Here he could mean nothing else but to wish that he had died in Absalom's stead. In the sense of "in the room or stead of," *αντι* is also used in many places of the New Testament; as, "Archelaus did reign in Judea, *αντι*, in the room of, his father Herod:" "If he ask a fish, will he, *αντι*, for, a fish," in place or instead of a fish, "give him a serpent?" When, therefore, the same preposition is used Mark x. 45, "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom *αντι*, for, many," there can surely be no reason drawn from the meaning of the particle itself to prevent its being so understood. That it may be so taken is certain, for this is a sense of the preposition constantly occurring; and if that sense is rejected, and another chosen, the reason must be brought from the contrariety of the doctrine which it conveys to some other that is indubitably established by other texts; whereas, not one passage is produced, which denies that Christ did thus die in the stead of the ungodly, and give his life a ransom in the place or stead

of the lives of many. The particles *υπερ* and *αντι* have other senses; this is not denied; but, as Bishop Stillingfleet has observed, “a substitution could not be more properly expressed than it is in Scripture by them.”

The force of this has, at all times, been felt by the Socinians; and has rendered it necessary for them to resort to subterfuges. Socinus acknowledges, and after him Crellius, that, “when redemption is spoken of, *αντι* implies ‘commutation;’” but they attempt to escape, by considering both the redemption and the commutation metaphorical. Dr. Priestley, too, admits that the probable interpretation of Christ’s dying “for” us, is, that he died “instead of” us; and then contends that he did this consequentially, and not directly “as a substitute for us: For if, in consequence of Christ’s not having been sent to instruct and reform the world, mankind had continued unreformed, and if the necessary consequence of Christ’s coming was his death, by whatever means, and in whatever manner, it was brought about; it is plain that there was, in fact, no other alternative but his death or ours.”\* Thus, under the force of the doctrine of the New Testament, that Christ died in our stead, he admits the absolute necessity of the death of Christ, in order to human salvation, contrary to all the principles he elsewhere lays down, and in refutation of his own objections, and those of his followers, to the orthodox view of the death of our Saviour, as being the only means by which mercy could be dispensed to mankind. But that Christ died for us directly as a substitute, which is still the point denied, is to be fully proved from those scriptures in which he is said to have borne the punishment due to our offences; and this being established, it puts an entire end to all quibbling on the import of the Greek prepositions.

To prove this, the passages of holy writ are exceedingly numerous; but it will be more satisfactory to select a few, and point out their force, than to give a long list of citations.

Grotius† thus clearly proves that the Scriptures represent our sins as the impulsive cause of the death of Christ:—

\* History of Corruptions, &c.

† *De Satisfactione.*

“Another cause which moved God was our sins, which deserve punishment. Christ was ‘delivered for our offences.’ (Rom. iv. 25.) Here the Apostle uses the preposition *δια* with the accusative case, which, with all Greek authors, sacred and profane, is the most usual manner of expressing an impulsive cause. For instance: *Δια ταυτα*, ‘Because of these things, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.’ (Eph. v. 6.) Indeed, whenever the expression, ‘because of sins,’ is coupled with the mention of sufferings, it never admits of any other interpretation. ‘I will chastise you seven times, because of your sins.’ (Lev. xxvi. 28.) ‘Because of these abominations the Lord God cast them out from his sight.’ (Deut. xviii. 12.) So it is used in many other places of the sacred writings, and nowhere in a different sense. The expression, ‘for sins,’ is also evidently of the same force, whenever it is connected with sufferings, as in the example following: ‘Christ died for our sins.’ (1 Cor. xv. 3.) ‘Christ hath once suffered for sins.’ (1 Peter iii. 18.) ‘Christ gave himself for our sins.’ (Gal. i. 4.) ‘Christ offered one sacrifice for sins.’ (Heb. x. 12.) In all which places we have either *υπερ* or *περι* with the genitive case. But Socinus maintains, that in all these places a final, and not an impulsive, cause is intended. He even goes so far as to assert, that the Latin *pro* and the Greek *υπερ* never denote an impulsive, but always a final, cause. Many examples prove the latter assertion to be untrue. For both *υπερ* and *περι* are used to signify no less an impulsive, than a final, cause. The Gentiles are said to praise God *υπερ ελεος*, ‘for his mercy.’ (Rom. xv. 9.) Paul says, thanks are given *υπερ ημων*, ‘for us,’ (Eph. i. 16,) and *υπερ παντων* ‘for all.’ (Eph. v. 20.) ‘We pray you *υπερ Χριστου*, for Christ.’ (2 Cor. v. 20.) ‘Great is my glorying *υπερ υμων*, for you.’ (2 Cor. vii. 4; ix. 2; xii. 5.) ‘Distresses *υπερ Χριστου*, for Christ.’ (2 Cor. xii. 10.) ‘I thank God *υπερ υμων*, for you.’ (1 Cor. i. 4.) ‘God shall reprove all the ungodly *περι παντων εργων ασεβειας*, for all their works of ungodliness.’ (Jude 15.) In the same manner, the Latins say, to give or render thanks *pro beneficiis*, ‘for benefits,’ as often in Cicero. He also says, ‘to take vengeance *pro injuriis*, for injuries;’



‘to suffer punishment *pro magnitudine sceleris*, for the greatness of a crime;’ ‘to fear torments *pro maleficiis*, for evil deeds.’ Plautus, ‘to chastise *pro commeritâ noxiâ*, for faults which deserve it.’ And Terence, ‘to take vengeance *pro dictis et factis*, for words and deeds.’ Certainly, in all these places, *pro* does not signify a final, but an impulsive, cause. So, when Christ is said to have suffered and died ‘for’ sins, the subject will not allow us, as Socinus wishes, to understand a final cause. Hence, also, as the Hebrew particle *וְ* denotes an antecedent or impulsive cause, (see Psalm xxxviii. 9, and many other places,) the words of Isaiah liii. cannot be better translated, or more agreeably with other scriptures, than, ‘He was wounded on account of our transgressions; he was bruised on account of our iniquities.’ And what can Rom. vi. 10, *τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν*, denote, but that ‘he died on account of sin?’”

Crellius, who attempted an answer to Grotius, at length acknowledges sin to have been an impulsive cause of the death of Christ; but neutralizes the admission by his sophistry. On this Bishop Stillingfleet has well observed, that we understand not an impulsive cause in so remote a sense, as though our sins were an occasion of Christ’s dying, so that his death was one argument, among many others, to believe his doctrine, the belief of which would cause men to leave their sins. But we contend for a nearer and more proper sense, that the death of Christ was primarily intended for the expiation of sins, with respect to God, and not to us; and that our sins, as an impulsive cause, are to be considered as so displeasing to God, that it was necessary, for the vindication of his honour, and the deterring the world from sin, that no less a sacrifice of atonement should be offered than the blood of the Son of God. The sufferings of Christ, when considered with respect to our sins, are to be considered as a punishment; when with respect to God, as being designed to expiate them, as a sacrifice of atonement.

It is thus that Christ is said to bear our sins: “Who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;” (1 Peter ii. 24;) where the Apostle evidently quotes from Isaiah liii. :



“He shall bear their iniquities.” “He bore the sin of many.” The same expression is used by St. Paul, Heb. ix. 28: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Now, “to bear sin” is, in the language of Scripture, to bear the punishment of sin; (Lev. xxii. 9; Ezek. xviii. 20;) and the use of the compound verb *αναφέρω*, by both Apostles, is worthy of notice. St. Peter “might have said simply, *ἠνεγχε*, ‘He bore;’ but wishing at the same time to signify his being lifted up on the cross, he said, *Ανηνεγχε*, ‘He bore up,’ meaning, he bore by going up to the cross.”\* St. Paul, too, uses the same verb with reference to the Levitical sacrifices, which were carried to an elevated altar, and to the sacrifice of Christ. Socinus and his followers cannot deny that “to bear sin,” in Scripture, generally signifies “to bear the punishment of sin;” but, availing themselves of the very force of the compound verb *αναφέρω*, just pointed out, they interpret the passage in St. Peter to signify the bearing up, that is, the bearing or carrying away, of our sins, which, according to them, may be effected in many other ways than by a vicarious sacrifice. To this, Grotius replies, “The particle *ανα* will not admit of such a sense, nor is the word ever so used by any Greek writer. In the New Testament it never occurs in such a meaning.” It is also decisive as to the sense in which St. Peter uses the phrase, “to bear sin,” that he quotes from Isaiah liii. 11: “For he shall bear their iniquities,” where the Hebrew word, by the confession of all, is never used for taking away, but for bearing a burden, and is employed to express the punishment of sin, as in Lam. v. 7, “Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities.”

Similar to this expression of bearing sins, and equally impracticable to the criticism of the Socinians, is the declaration of Isaiah in the same chapter: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;” to which the Prophet, in order to show in what sense he was wounded and bruised for our transgressions, adds, “The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” Now,

\* Grotius.

chastisement is the punishment of a fault ; but the suffering person, of whom the Prophet speaks, is declared to be wholly free from transgression, to be perfectly and emphatically innocent. This prophecy is applied to Christ by the Apostles, whose constant doctrine is the entire immaculateness of their Master and Lord. If chastisement, therefore, was laid upon Christ, it could not be on account of faults of his own ; his sufferings were the chastisement of our faults, the price of our peace, and his “ stripes ” (another punitive expression) were borne by him for our “ healing.” The only course which Socinus and his followers have taken, to endeavour to escape the force of this passage, is to render the word, not “ chastisement,” but “ affliction ; ” in answer to which Grotius and subsequent critics have abundantly proved, that it is used not to signify “ affliction ” of any kind, but that which has the nature of punishment. These passages, therefore, prove a substitution, a suffering in our stead. The chastisement of offences was laid upon him, in order to our peace ; and the offences were ours, since they could not be his “ who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

The same view is presented to us under another, and even still more forcible, phrase, in the 6th and 7th verses of the same chapter : “ All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him ” (literally, “ hath made to meet on him ”) “ the iniquity of us all ; he was oppressed and he was afflicted.” Bishop Lowth translates this passage, “ And the Lord hath made to light upon him the iniquity of us all ; it was exacted, and he was made answerable.” In a similar manner, several former critics : “ He put or fixed together upon him the iniquity of us all ; it was exacted, and he was afflicted.”\* This sense is fully established by Grotius against Socinus, and by Bishop Stillingfleet against Crellius ; and thus the passage is obviously incapable of explanation, except by allowing the sufferings and death of our Lord to be vicarious. Our iniquities, that is, according to the Hebrew mode of speaking, their punishment,

\* Vide Poli *Synopsis*.

are made to meet upon him ; they are fixed together and laid upon him ; the penalty is exacted from him, though he himself had incurred no penalty personally ; and therefore it was in consequence of that vicarious exaction, that he was “ afflicted,” was “ made answerable,” and, voluntarily submitting, “ he opened not his mouth.”

In 2 Corinthians v. 21, the Apostle uses almost the same language : “ For he hath made him to be sin,” a sin-offering, “ for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” The Socinian Improved Version has a note on this passage so obscure, that the point is evidently given up in despair. Socinus before had attempted an elusive interpretation, which requires scarcely an effort to refute. By Christ’s being “ made sin,” he would understand being esteemed a sinner by men. But, as Grotius observes,\* neither is the Greek word translated “ sin,” nor the Hebrew word, answering to it, ever taken in such a sense. Besides, the Apostle has attributed this act to God ; it was he who made him to be sin ; but he certainly did not cause the Jews and others to esteem Christ a wicked man. On the contrary, by a voice from heaven, and by miracles, he did all that was proper to prove to all men his innocence. Further, St. Paul places “ sin ” and “ righteousness ” in opposition to each other : “ We are made the righteousness of God,” that is, are justified and freed from divine punishment ; but, in order to this, Christ was “ made sin,” or bore our punishment. There is also another antithesis in the Apostle’s words,—God made him who knew no sin, and, consequently, deserved no punishment, to be sin ; that is, it pleased him that he should be punished ; but Christ was innocent, not only according to human laws, but according to the law of God ; the antithesis, therefore, requires us to understand, that he bore the penalty of that law, and that he bore it in our stead.

How explicitly the death of Christ is represented in the New Testament as penal, (which it could not be in any other way than by his taking our place, and suffering in our stead,)

\* *De Satisfactione.*



is manifest also from Galatians iii. 13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse," an execration, "for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The passage in Moses, to which St. Paul refers, is Deuteronomy xxi. 22, 23: "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, (for he that is hanged is accursed of God,) that thy land be not defiled." This infamy was only inflicted upon great offenders, and was designed to show the light in which the person thus exposed was viewed by God,—he was a curse or execration. On this, the remarks of Grotius are most forcible and conclusive: "Socinus says, that 'to be an execration' means 'to be under the punishment of execration,' which is true. For *κατάρα* every where denotes punishment proceeding from the sanction of law. (2 Peter ii. 14; Matt. xxv. 41.) Socinus also admits, that the cross of Christ was this curse; his cross, therefore, had the nature of punishment, which is what we maintain. Perhaps Socinus allows, that the cross of Christ was a punishment, because Pilate, as a Judge, inflicted it; but this does not come up to the intention of the Apostle; for, in order to prove that Christ was made obnoxious to punishment, he cites Moses, who expressly asserts, that whoever hangs on a tree, according to the divine law, is 'accursed of God;' consequently, in the words of the Apostle, who cites this place of Moses, and refers it to Christ, we must supply the same circumstance, 'accursed of God;' as if he had said, Christ was made accursed of God, or obnoxious to the highest and most ignominious punishment, 'for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles,' &c. For when the Apostles speak of the sufferings of Christ in reference to our good, they do not regard the acts of men in them, but the act of God." \*

4. We are carried still further into the real nature and design of the death of Christ, by those passages of holy Scripture which connect with it propitiation, atonement, reconcilia-

\* *De Satisfactione.*



tion, and the making peace between God and man; and the more attentively these are considered, the more unfounded will the Socinian notion appear which represents the death of Christ as, indirectly only, a benefit to us, and as saving us from our sins and their punishment, only as it is a motive to repentance and virtue.

“To propitiate” is “to appease,” “to atone,” “to turn away the wrath of an offended person.” In the case before us, the wrath turned away is the wrath of God; the person making the propitiation is Christ; the propitiating offering or sacrifice is his blood. All this is expressed in most explicit terms, in the following passages: “And he is the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John ii. 2.) “Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John iv. 10.) “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” (Rom. iii. 25.) The word used in the two former passages is *ιλασμος*; in the last, *ιλαστηριον*. Both are from the verb *ιλασκω*, so often used by Greek writers to express the action of a person who, in some appointed way, turned away the wrath of a deity; and therefore cannot bear the sense which Socinus would put upon it,—the destruction of sin. This is not supported by a single example: With all Greek authorities, whether poets, historians, or others, the word means “to propitiate,” and is, for the most part, construed with an accusative case, designating the person whose displeasure is averted.\* As this could not be denied, Crellius comes to the aid of Socinus, and contends, that the sense of this word was not to be taken from its common use in the Greek tongue, but from the Hellenistic use of it, namely, its use in the Greek of the New Testament, the LXX., and the Apocrypha. But this will not serve him; for both by the LXX., and in the Apocrypha, it is used in the same sense as in the Greek classic writers. “He shall offer his *ιλασμον*, sin-offering, saith the Lord God.” (Ezek. xlv. 27.) “And the Priest shall take the blood of the *εξιλασμος*, sin-offering.” (Ezek. xlv. 19.)

\* Grotius *De Satisfactione*.

Κριος τε ιλασμε, "The ram of the atonement." (Num. v. 8.) To which may be added, out of the Apocrypha, "Now as the High Priest was making ιλασμον, an atonement." (2 Mac. iii. 33.)

The propitiatory sense of the word ιλασμος being thus fixed, the modern Socinians have conceded, in their note on John ii. 2, in their Improved Version, that it means the "pacifying of an offended party;" but they subjoin, that Christ is a propitiation, because "by his Gospel he brings sinners to repentance, and thus averts the divine displeasure." The concession is important; and the comment cannot weaken it, because of its absurdity; for, in that interpretation of propitiation, Moses, or any of the Apostles, or any Minister of the Gospel now, who succeeds in bringing sinners to repentance, is as truly a propitiation for sin as Christ himself. On Romans iii. 25, however, the authors of the Improved Version continue to follow their master Socinus, and translate the passage, "whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood," "whom God hath set forth as a mercy-seat in his own blood;" and lay great stress upon this rendering, as removing "that countenance to the doctrine of atonement by vicarious sufferings," which the common translation affords. The word ιλασηριον is used in the Septuagint Version, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to express the mercy-seat or covering of the ark. But so little is to be gained by taking it in this sense in this passage, that this rendering is adopted by several orthodox commentators as expressing, by a figure, or rather by supplying a type to the antitype, in a very emphatic manner, the doctrine of our Lord's atonement. The mercy-seat was so called, because, under the Old Testament, it was the place where the High Priest, on the feast of expiation, sprinkled the blood of the sin-offerings, in order to make an atonement for himself and the whole congregation; and, since God accepted the offering which was then made, it is, for this reason, accounted the medium through which God showed himself propitious to the people. With reference to this, Jesus Christ may be called a "mercy-seat," as being the person in or through whom God shows himself propitious to mankind.

And as, under the law, God was propitious to those who came to him by appearing before his mercy-seat with the blood of their sin-offerings; so, under the Gospel dispensation, he is propitious to those who come unto him by Jesus Christ, through faith in that blood which is elsewhere called "the blood of sprinkling," and which he shed for the remission of sins. Some able critics have, however, argued, from the force of the context, that the word ought to be taken actively, and not merely declaratively; not as a propitiatory, but as a propitiation, which, says Grotius, "is shown by the mention which is afterwards made of blood, to which the power of propitiation is ascribed." Others supply *θύμα*, or *ιερείον*, and render it, "expiatory sacrifice."\* But, whichever of these renderings be adopted, the same doctrine is held forth to us. The covering of the ark was rendered a propitiatory only by the blood of the victims sprinkled before and upon it; and when the Apostle says, that God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiatory, he immediately adds, having the ceremonies of the temple in his view, "through faith in his blood." The text, therefore, contains no exhibition of any means of obtaining mercy but through the blood of sacrifice, according to the rule laid down in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" and is in strict accordance with Ephesians i. 7, "We have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins." It is only by his blood that Christ reconciles us to God.

Unable, as they who deny the vicarious nature of the sufferings of Christ are, to evade the testimony of the above passages which speak of our Lord as a propitiation, what is their next resource? They deny the existence of wrath in God, in the hope of proving that propitiation, in a proper sense, cannot be the doctrine of Scripture, whatever may be the force of the mere terms which the sacred writers employ. In order to give plausibility to their statement, they pervert and caricature the opinion of the orthodox, and argue as though it formed a part of the doctrine of Christ's propitiation and oblation for sin, that

\* Vide Elsner *Observat.*—SCHLEUSNER *sub voce*.



God is naturally an implacable and vengeful being, only made placable and disposed to show mercy by satisfaction being made to his displeasure through our Lord's sufferings and death. This is as contrary to Scripture as it is to the opinions of all sober persons who hold the doctrine of Christ's atonement. God is love ; but it is not necessary, in order to support this truth, to assume that he is nothing else. He has, as we have seen, other attributes, which harmonize with this and with each other, though, assuredly, that harmony cannot be exhibited by any who deny the propitiation for sin made by the death of Christ. Their system therefore obliges them to deny the existence of some of the attributes of God, or to explain them away.

It sufficiently proves that there is not only no implacability in God, but a most tender and placable affection towards the sinning human race itself, that the Son of God, by whom the propitiation was made, was the free gift of the Father to us. This is the most eminent proof of his love, that, for our sakes, and that mercy might be extended to us, "he spared not his own Son ; but delivered him up freely for us all." Thus he is the fountain and first moving cause of that scheme of recovery and salvation which the incarnation and death of our Lord brought into full and efficient operation. The question, indeed, is, not whether God is love, or whether he is of a placable nature, (in that we are agreed,) but it is, whether God is holy and just ; whether we, his creatures, are under law or not ; whether this law has any penalty ; and whether God, in his rectoral character, is bound to execute and uphold that law. These are points which have already been established ; and as the justice of God is punitive, (for if it is not punitive, his laws are a dead letter,) then is there wrath in God ; then is God angry with the wicked ; then is man, as a sinner, obnoxious to this anger ; and so a propitiation becomes necessary to turn it away from him. Nor are these terms unscriptural ; they are used in the New Testament as emphatically as in the Old, though the former is, in a special sense, a revelation of the mercy of God to man. John the Baptist declares, that, if any man believeth not on the Son



of God, "the wrath of God abideth upon him." St. Paul declares, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The day of judgment is, with reference to the ungodly, said to be "the day of wrath;" God is called "a consuming fire;" and, as such, is the object of "reverence and godly fear." Nor is this his displeasure light, and the consequences of it a trifling and temporary inconvenience. When we only regard the consequences which have followed sin in society, from the earliest ages, and in every part of the world, and add to these the many direct and fearful inflictions of punishment which have proceeded from the "Judge of the whole earth," to use the language of Scripture, "our flesh may well tremble because of his judgments." But when we look at the future state of the wicked, as represented in Scripture, though it is expressed generally, and surrounded with the mystery of a world, and a condition of being, unknown to us in the present state, all evils which history has crowded into the lot of man appear insignificant in comparison of banishment from God; separation from the good; public condemnation; torment of spirit; "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" "everlasting destruction;" "everlasting fire." Let men talk ever so much or eloquently of the pure benevolence of God, they cannot abolish the facts recorded in the history of human suffering in this world as the effects of transgression; nor can they discharge these fearful comminations from the pages of the book of God. They cannot be criticised away; and if it is "Jesus who saves us from this wrath to come," that is, from those effects of the wrath of God which are to come, then, but for him, we should have been liable to them. That principle in God, from which such effects follow, the Scriptures call "wrath;" and they who deny the existence of wrath in God, deny, therefore, the Scriptures.

It by no means follows, however, that those who thus bow to inspired authority must interpret wrath to be a passion in God; or that, though we contend that the awful attribute of his justice requires satisfaction in order to the forgiveness of the guilty, we afford reason to any to charge us with

attributing vengeful affections to the divine Being. "Our adversaries," says Bishop Stillingfleet, "first make opinions for us, and then show that they are unreasonable. They first suppose that anger in God is to be considered as a passion, and that passion a desire of revenge; and then tell us, that if we do not prove that this desire of revenge can be satisfied by the sufferings of Christ, then we can never prove the doctrine of satisfaction to be true: Whereas we do not mean, by God's anger, any such passion, but the just declaration of God's will to punish, upon our provocation of him by our sins; we do not make the design of the satisfaction to be, that God may please himself in the revenging the sins of the guilty upon the most innocent person, because we make the design of punishment not to be the satisfaction of anger as a desire of revenge, but to be the vindication of the honour and rights of the offended person, by such a way as he himself shall judge satisfactory to the ends of his government."\*

This is a sufficient answer; and we now proceed with those passages of Scripture, the phraseology of which still further establishes the doctrine of Christ's atonement. To those in which Christ is called a propitiation, we add those which speak of reconciliation and the establishment of peace between God and man as the design and direct effect of his death. So Col. i. 19—22: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death." "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. v. 10, 11.) "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us

the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. v. 18, 19.) The verbs translated "to reconcile" are *καταλλάσσω* and *αποκαταλλάσσω*, which signify a change from one state to another; but, in these passages, the connexion determines the nature of the change to be a change from enmity to friendship. In Rom. v. 11, the noun *καταλλαγή* is rendered, in our translation, "atonement;" but it is contended, that it ought to have been rendered "reconciliation," unless we admit the primitive meaning of the English word "atonement," which is, "a being at one," to be affixed to it. It was not in this sense, certainly, that the word "atonement" was used by the translators; and it is now fixed in its meaning, and, in common language, signifies "propitiation," in the proper and sacrificial sense. It is not, however, at all necessary to stand upon the rendering of *καταλλαγή* in this passage by the term "atonement." We lose nothing, as we shall see, and the Socinians gain nothing, by rendering it "reconciliation;" which, indeed, appears more agreeable to the context. The word "atonement" would have been a proper substitute for "propitiation" in those passages of the New Testament in which it occurs, as being more obvious in its meaning to the common reader; and because the original word answers to the Hebrew *כִּפָּר*, which is used for the legal atonements; "but as the reconciliation which we have received through Christ was the effect of atonement made for us by his death, words which denote the former simply (as *καταλλαγή*, and words from the same root) may, when applied to the sacrifice of Christ, be not unfitly expressed by the latter, as containing in them its full import."\* We may observe, also, that if, as it is contended, we must render Rom. v. 11, "by whom we have received the reconciliation," the preceding verse must not be overlooked, which declares, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" which death, we have just seen, is in other passages called a "propitiation" or "atonement;" and so the Apostle conveys no other idea by the term "reconciliation" than reconciliation through an atonement.

\* Magee's Discourses.



The expressions “reconciliation,” and “making peace,” necessarily suppose a previous state of hostility between God and man, which is reciprocal. This is sometimes called “enmity,”—a term, as it respects God, rather unfortunate, since enmity is almost fixed in our language to signify a malignant and revengeful feeling. Of this, the opposers of the doctrine of the atonement have availed themselves to argue, that, as there can be no such affection in the divine nature, therefore, “reconciliation” in Scripture does not mean the reconciliation of God to man, but of man to God, whose enmity the example and teaching of Christ, they tell us, is very effectual to subdue. It is, indeed, a sad and humbling truth, and one which the Socinians in their discussions on the natural innocence of man are not willing to admit, that by the infection of sin “the carnal mind is enmity to God,” that human nature is malignantly hostile to God, and to the control of his law; but this is far from expressing the whole of that relation of man in which, in Scripture, he is said to be at enmity with God, and so to need a reconciliation,—the making of peace between God and him. That relation is a legal one, as that of a Sovereign in his judicial capacity, and a criminal who has violated his laws and risen up against his authority, and who is therefore treated as an enemy. The word *εχθρος* is used in this passive sense, both in the Greek writers, and in the New Testament. So, in Rom. xi. 28, the Jews, rejected and punished for refusing the Gospel, are said by the Apostle, “as concerning the Gospel,” to be “enemies for your sakes;” treated and accounted such; “but, as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” In the same Epistle, chap. v. 10, the term is used precisely in the same sense, and that with reference to the reconciliation by Christ: “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;” that is, when we were objects of the divine judicial displeasure, accounted as enemies, and liable to be capitally treated as such. Enmity, in the sense of malignity and the sentiment of hatred, is added to this relation in the case of man; but it is no part of the relation itself; it is rather a cause of it, as it is one of the actings of a corrupt



nature which render man obnoxious to the displeasure of God, and the penalty of his law, and place him in the condition of an enemy. It is this judicial variance and opposition between God and man which is referred to in the term "reconciliation," and in the phrase "making peace," in the New Testament ; and the hostility is, therefore, in its own nature, mutual.

But that there is no truth in the notion just refuted, namely, that reconciliation means no more than our laying aside our enmity to God, may also be shown from several express passages. The first is the passage we have above cited : "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God." (Rom. v. 10.) Here the act of reconciling is ascribed to God, and not to us ; but if this reconciliation consisted in the laying aside of our own enmity, the act would be ours alone : And, further, that it could not be the laying aside of our enmity, is clear from the text, which speaks of reconciliation whilst we were yet enemies. "The reconciliation spoken of here is not, as Socinus and his followers have said, our conversion. For that the Apostle is speaking of a benefit obtained for us previous to our conversion, appears evident from the opposite members of the two sentences ;—'much more, being justified, we shall be saved from wrath through him ;' 'much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' The Apostle argues from the greater to the less. If God were so benign to us before our conversion, what may we not expect from him now we are converted ? 'To reconcile,' here, cannot mean 'to convert ;' for the Apostle evidently speaks of something greatly remarkable in the act of Christ ; but to convert sinners is nothing remarkable, since none but sinners can be ever converted ; whereas it was a rare and singular thing for Christ to die for sinners, and to reconcile sinners to God by his death, when there have been but very few good men who have died for their friends. In the next place, conversion is referred more properly to his glorious life, than to his shameful death ; but this reconciliation is attributed to his death, as contradistinguished from his glorious life, as is evident from the antithesis contained in the two verses. Besides, it is from

the latter benefit that we learn the nature of the former. The latter, which belongs only to the converted, consists of the peace of God, and salvation from wrath. (Verses 9, 10.) This the Apostle afterwards calls ‘receiving the reconciliation :’ And what is it to receive the reconciliation, but to receive the remission of sins ? (Acts x. 43.) ‘To receive conversion’ is a mode of speaking entirely unknown. If, then, ‘to receive the reconciliation’ is ‘to receive the remission of sins,’ and in effect to be delivered from wrath or punishment, ‘to be reconciled’ must have a corresponding signification.”\*

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” (2 Cor. v. 19.) Here the manner of this reconciliation is expressly said to be, not our laying aside our enmity, but the non-imputation of our trespasses to us by God ; in other words, the pardoning of our offences and restoring us to favour. The promise, on God’s part, to do this, is expressive of his previous reconciliation to the world by the death of Christ ; for our actual reconciliation is distinguished from this by what follows,—“and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation,” by virtue of which all men were, by the Apostles, entreated and besought to be reconciled to God. The reason, too, of this reconciliation of God to the world, by virtue of which he promises not to impute sin, is grounded by the Apostle, in the last verse of the chapter, not upon the laying aside of enmity by men, but upon the sacrifice of Christ : “For he hath made him to be sin” (a sin offering) “for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” (Eph. ii. 16.) Here the act of reconciling is attributed to Christ. Man is not spoken of as reconciling himself to God ; but Christ is said to reconcile Jews and Gentiles together, and both to God, “by his cross.” Thus, says the Apostle, “he is our peace ;” but in what manner is the peace effected ? Not, in the first instance, by subduing the enmity of man’s heart, but by

\* Vide Grotius, *De Satisfactione*.

removing the enmity of "the law." "Having abolished in" (or by) "his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments." The ceremonial law only is here, probably, meant; for by its abolition, through its fulfilment in Christ, the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was taken away; but still it was not only necessary to reconcile Jew and Gentile together, but to reconcile both unto God. This he did by the same act; abolishing the ceremonial law by becoming the antitype of all its sacrifices, and thus, by the sacrifice of himself, effecting the reconciliation of all to God, "slaying the enmity by his cross," taking away whatever hindered the reconciliation of the guilty to God, which, as we have seen, was not enmity and hatred to God in the human mind only, but that judicial hostility and variance which separated God and man as Judge and criminal. The feeble criticism of Socinus, on this passage, in which he has been followed by his adherents to this day, is thus answered by Grotius: "In this passage the dative Θεῷ, 'to God,' can only be governed by the verb ἀποκαταλλάξῃ, 'that he might reconcile;' for the interpretation of Socinus, which makes 'to God' stand by itself, or that 'to reconcile to God' is to reconcile them among themselves, that they might serve God, is distorted and without example. Nor is the argument valid which is drawn from thence, that in this place St. Paul properly treats of the peace made between Jews and Gentiles; for neither does it follow, from this argument, that it was beside his purpose to mention the peace made for each with God. For the two opposites which are joined are so joined among themselves, that they should be primarily and chiefly joined by that bond; for they are not united among themselves, except by and for that bond. Gentiles and Jews, therefore, are made friends among themselves by friendship with God."\*

Here also a critical remark will be appropriate. The above passages will show how falsely it has been asserted that God is no where in Scripture said to be reconciled to us, and that they only declare that we are reconciled to God; but the fact



is, that the very phrase of “our being reconciled to God” imports the turning away of his wrath from us. Whitby observes, on the words *καταλλαττειν* and *καταλλαγη*, “that they naturally import the reconciliation of one that is angry or displeased with us, both in profane and Jewish writers.”\* When the Philistines suspected that David would appease the anger of Saul, by becoming their adversary, they said, “Wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?”—not, surely, How shall he remove his own anger against his master? but, How shall he remove his master’s anger against him? How shall he restore himself to his master’s favour? “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,” not, that thou hast aught against thy brother, “first be reconciled to thy brother;” that is, appease and conciliate him; so that the words, in fact, import, “See that thy brother be reconciled to thee,” since that which goes before is, not that he hath done thee an injury, but thou him.†

Thus, then, for us to be reconciled to God is to avail ourselves of the means by which the anger of God toward us is to be appeased, which the New Testament expressly declares to be meritoriously the sin-offering of Him who “knew no sin,” and instrumentally, as to each individual personally, “faith in his blood.”

A general objection of the Socinians to this doctrine of reconciliation may be easily answered. When we speak of the necessity of Christ’s atonement, in order to man’s forgiveness, we are told, that we represent the Deity as implacable: When we rebut this, by showing that it was his very placability, his boundless and ineffable love to men, which sent his Son into the world to die for the sins of mankind, they rejoin, with their leaders, Socinus and Crellius, that then “God was reconciled

\* See also Hammond, Rosenmüller, and Schleusner.

† The writers of the New Testament, say some, derive this mode of expression from the force of the Hebrew word *רצה* transferred to the Greek word; but Palaiet, Grotius, and Schleusner give instances of the use of the term, in the same signification, in writers purely Greek.



before he sent his Son ; and that, therefore, Christ did not die to reconcile God to us." The answer plainly is, that, in this objection, they either mean that God had, from the placability and compassion of his nature, determined to be reconciled to offenders upon the sending his Son, or that he was actually reconciled when our Lord was sent. The first is what we contend for, and is in no wise inconsistent with the submission of our Lord to death, since that was in pursuance of the merciful appointment and decree of the Father, and was the necessary medium by which this placability of God could honourably and consistently show itself in actual reconciliation, or the pardon of sin. That God was not actually reconciled to man, that is, that he did not forgive our offences, independent of the death of Christ, is clear ; for then sin would have been forgiven before it was committed, and remission of sins could not have been preached in the name of Christ, nor could a ministry of reconciliation have been committed to the Apostles. The reconciliation of God to man is, throughout, a conditional one ; and, as in all conditional processes of this kind, it has three stages. The first is, when the party offended is disposed to admit of terms of agreement, which, in God, is matter of pure grace and favour ; the second is, when he declares his acceptance of the mediation of a third person, and that he is so satisfied with what he hath done in order to it, that he appoints it to be announced to the offender, that, if the breach continues, the fault lies wholly upon himself ; the third is, when the offender accepts of the terms of agreement which are offered to him, submits, and is received into favour. " Thus," says Bishop Stillingfleet, " upon the death and sufferings of Christ, God declares that he is so satisfied with what Christ hath done and suffered in order to the reconciliation between himself and us, that he now publishes remission of sins to the world, upon those terms which the Mediator hath declared by his own doctrine and the Apostles he sent to preach it. But because remission of sins doth not immediately follow upon the death of Christ, without any supposition of any act on our part, therefore the state of favour doth commence from the performance of the conditions which are

required of us.”\* Whoever considers these obvious distinctions will have an ample answer to the Socinian objection.

5. To the texts which speak of reconciliation with God as illustrative of the nature of the death of Christ for us, we add those which speak of “redemption ;” either by employing that word itself, or others of the same import. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. iii. 24.) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” (Gal. iii. 13.) “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. i. 7.) “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1 Peter i. 18, 19.) “And ye are not your own ; for ye are bought with a price.” (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.)

By “redemption,” those who deny the atonement made by Christ wish to understand “deliverance” merely, regarding only the effect, and studiously putting out of sight the cause from which it flows. But the very terms used in the above-cited passages, “to redeem,” and “to be bought with a price,” will each be found to refute this notion of a gratuitous deliverance, whether from sin or punishment, or both. Our English word, “to redeem,” literally means “to buy back ;” and λυτρωω, “to redeem,” and απολυτρωσις, “redemption,” are, both in Greek writers and in the New Testament, used for the act of setting free a captive, by paying λυτρον, “a ransom” or “redemption-price.” But, as Grotius† has fully shown, by reference to the use of the words both in sacred and profane writers, “redemption” signifies not merely the liberation of captives, but deliverance from exile, death, and every other evil from which we may be freed ; and λυτρον signifies every thing which satisfies another, so as to effect this deliverance. The nature of this redemption or purchased deliverance,

\* Discourse on the Sufferings of Christ. See also Grotius *De Satisfactione*, cap. vii.

† *De Satisfactione*, cap. viii.

(for it is not gratuitous liberation, as will presently appear,) is, therefore, to be ascertained by the circumstances of those who are the subjects of it. The subjects in the case before us are sinful men. They are under guilt,—under “the curse of the law,” the servants of sin, under the power and dominion of the devil, and “taken captive by him at his will,”—liable to the death of the body and to eternal punishment. To the whole of this case, the redemption, the purchased deliverance of man, as proclaimed in the Gospel, applies itself. Hence, in the above-cited and other passages, it is said, “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,” in opposition to guilt; redemption from “the curse of the law;” deliverance from sin, that “we should be set free from sin;” deliverance from the power of Satan; from death, by a resurrection; and from future wrath, by the gift of eternal life. Throughout the whole of this glorious doctrine of our redemption from these tremendous evils there is, however, in the New Testament, a constant reference to the *λυτρον*, “the redemption-price;” which *λυτρον* is as constantly declared to be the death of Christ, which he endured in our stead. “The Son of man came to give his life *λυτρον*, a ransom, for many.” (Matt. xx. 28.) “Who gave himself *αντιλυτρον*, a ransom, for all.” (1 Tim. ii. 6.) “In whom we have *την απολυτρωσιν*, redemption, through his blood.” (Eph. i. 7.) *Ελυτρωθητε*, “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” (1 Peter i. 18, 19.) That deliverance of man from sin, misery, and all other penal evils of his transgression, which constitutes our redemption by Christ is not, therefore, a gratuitous deliverance, granted without a consideration, as an act of mere prerogative; the ransom, the redemption-price, was exacted and paid; one thing was given for another,—the precious blood of Christ for captive and condemned men. Of the same import are those passages which represent us as having been bought or purchased by Christ. St. Peter speaks of those “who denied the Lord *τον αγορασαντα αυτους*, that bought them;” and St. Paul, in the passage cited above, says, *Ηγορασθητε*, “Ye are bought, with a price;” which price is expressly said, by St.



John, (Rev. v. 9,) to be the blood of Christ: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God (*ηγορασας*, hast purchased us) by thy blood."

The means by which it has been attempted to evade the force of these most express statements of the inspired writers remain to be pointed out and refuted.

The first is to allege that the term "redemption" is sometimes used for simple deliverance, where no price or consideration is supposed to be given; as when we read in the Old Testament of God's redeeming his people from trouble, from death, from danger, where no price is mentioned; and when Moses is called, (Acts vii. 35,) *λυτρωτης*, "a redeemer," because he delivered his people from the bondage of Egypt. But the occasional use of the term in an improper and allusive sense cannot be urged against its strict and proper signification universally; and granting the occasional use of it in an improper sense, it will still remain to be proved that, in the passages just adduced out of the New Testament, it is used in this manner. The propriety of words is not to be receded from, but for weighty reasons. The strict meaning of the verb "to redeem" is "to deliver from captivity, by paying a ransom;" it is extended to signify deliverance from evils of various kinds by the intervention of a valuable consideration; it is, in some cases, used for deliverance by any means. The context of the passage in which the word occurs, and the circumstances of the case, must therefore be resorted to in order to determine the sense in which the word is used. Fair criticism requires that we take words in their proper sense, unless a sufficient reason can be shown, from their connexion, to the contrary; and not that we first take them in their improper sense, and maintain it until the proper sense is forced upon us by argument. This, however, is not a case of this kind; for if deliverances from trouble and danger are, in some passages of the Old Testament, spoken of as "a redemption," without reference to a *λυτρον*, or "ransom," our redemption by Christ is not so spoken of; but, on the contrary, the *λυτρον*, or "redemption-price," is repeatedly, expressly, and emphatically mentioned, and that price is said



to be "the blood of Christ." When Greek writers speak of *αποινα* and *λυτρα*, with reference to the release of a prisoner, nothing would be more absurd than to attempt to resolve these terms into a figurative meaning; because their mention of the price, and the act of paying it, and the circumstances under which it was paid, all show that they use the terms in the proper and strict sense. For the same reason must they be so understood in the New Testament, since the price itself which constitutes the *λυτρον*, and the person who paid it, and the circumstances under which the transaction took place, are all given with as minute an historical precision; and a figurative interpretation would involve us in as great an absurdity in the one case as the other. We apply this to the case of Moses being called "a redeemer," with reference to his delivering Israel from Egypt, and remark, that the improper use of that term may be allowed in the case of Moses, because he is nowhere said to have redeemed Israel by his death or by his blood, nor to have purchased the Jews with a price, nor to have given himself as a ransom, nor to have interposed any other consideration, on account of which he was allowed to lead his people out of captivity. He is said to be a deliverer, a redeemer, and that is all; but the idea of a proper redemption could not, in the nature of things, apply to the case, and therefore it is impossible to interpret the term in its proper sense. The Jews were captives, and he delivered them; this was sufficient to warrant the use of the term "redemption" in its improper sense,—a very customary thing in language: But their captivity was not their fault, as ours is; it was not penal, as ours; they were delivered from unjust oppression; and God required of Moses no redemption-price, as a consideration for interposing to free them from bondage. In our case, the captivity was penal; there was a right lodged with the justice of God to detain us in it, and to inflict punishment upon us; and a consideration was therefore required, in respect of which that right was relaxed. In one instance we are therefore compelled to interpret the word in an improper sense; in the other, strictly; at least no argument can be drawn from the use of the word with reference to Moses, to

turn it out of its proper signification when used of Christ; and especially when all the circumstances, which the word, in its proper sense, was intended to convey, are found in the case to which the redemption of man by Christ is applied. Above all, the word *λυτρον* is added by Scripture to the deliverance of men, effected by Christ; but it is nowhere added to the deliverance effected for the Israelites by Moses; and by this it is, in fact, declared, that the mode by which the redemption of each was effected, was not the same,—the one was by the destruction of the enemies of the Israelites; the other, by the death of the Deliverer himself.\*

Socinians have attempted to evade the literal meaning of the important terms on which we have dwelt, by urging, that such an interpretation would involve the absurdity of paying a price to Satan, the power said to hold men captive at his will.

But why should the idea of redemption be confined to the purchasing of a captive? The reason appears to be, that the objection may be invested with some plausibility. The fact, however, is, that this is but one species and instance of redemption; for the word, in its proper and general sense, means deliverance from evil of any kind, a *λυτρον* or valuable consideration intervening; which valuable consideration may not always be literally a price, that is, not money, but something done, or something suffered, by which, in the case of commutation of punishment, the lawgiver is satisfied, though no

\* *Nam Mosis cum Christo instituta collatio, responsione vix indiget, cum omnis similitudo certos habeat terminos, quos extra protendi nequeat. Comparantur illi, qua liberatores, non ob liberandi modum. Neque magis ex eo sequitur, Christum satisfaciendo nos non liberasse, quia Moses id non fecerit, quam Christum nos liberasse per hominum mortem, quia id fecerit Moses. Quod si ad modum quoque liberandi comparatio pertineret, ea ut rectius procederet, dicendum esset, Christum nos liberasse miraculis, (ut Moses,) non autem suâ morte suoque sanguine, quod Mosi nec adscribitur, nec adscribi potest. Sed præcipuum est, quod vox *λυτρον*, de cujus vi hic agimus, liberationi per Mosen partæ nusquam additur. Quid quodne est Socini quidem sententia modus liberandi idem est? Nam Moses, Josue, et alii liberarunt, non aliquid faciendo circa liberandos, (quod Christo Socinus tribuit,) sed amovendo eos qui libertati obstabant, hostes scilicet.—GROTIUS De Satisfactione, cap. viii.*

benefit accrues to him ; because in punishment respect is not had to the benefit of the lawgiver, but to the common good and order of things. So when Zaleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, had to pass sentence upon his son, for a crime which, by his own laws, condemned the aggressor to the loss of both his eyes, rather than relax his laws by sparing his son, he ordered him to be deprived of one of his eyes, and submitted to be deprived of one himself. Thus the eye of Zaleucus was the *λυτρον* of that of his son ; and, in a decimation of mutinous soldiers, those who are punished are the *λυτρον* of the whole body.

But even if the redemption, in Scripture, related wholly to captivity, it does not follow that the price must be paid to him who detains the captive. Our captivity to Satan is not parallel to the case of a captive taken in war, and in whom, by the laws of war, the captor has obtained a right, and demands an equivalent for liberation and the renunciation of that right. Our captivity to Satan is judicial. Man listens to temptation, violates the laws of God, joins in a rebellion against his authority ; and his being left under the power of Satan is a part of his punishment. The satisfaction is, therefore, to be made to the law under which this captivity is made a part of the penalty ; not to him who detains the captive, and who is but a permitted instrument in the execution of the law, but to Him whose law has been violated. He who pays the price of redemption has to do with the judicial authority only, and, his *λυτρον* being accepted, he proceeds to rescue the object of his compassion, and becomes the actual redeemer.

The *λυτρον*, in the case of man, is the blood of Christ ; and our redemption is not a commutation of a pecuniary price for a person, but a commutation of the sufferings of one person in the stead of another ; which sufferings, being a punishment, in order to satisfaction, are a valuable consideration, and therefore a price for the redemption of man out of the hands of Satan, and from all the consequences of that captivity.\*

\* Vide Stillingfleet's Discourses on the Sufferings, &c.



Under this head, now that we are showing that the death of Christ is exhibited in Scripture as the price of our redemption, it may also be necessary to meet another objection, that “this doctrine of purchase and commutation is inconsistent with that freeness of the grace of God in the forgiveness of sins, on which so great a stress is laid in the Scriptures.” This objection has been urged from Socinus to Dr. Priestley, and is thus stated by the latter : \* “The Scriptures uniformly represent God as our universal Parent, pardoning sinners freely, that is, from his natural goodness and mercy, whenever they repent and reform their lives. All the declarations of divine mercy are made, without reserve and limitation, to the truly penitent through all the books of Scripture, without the most distant hint of any regard being had to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever.” The proofs which he gives for this bold, and, indeed, impudent, position, are chiefly the declaration of the Apostle, that we are justified freely by the grace of God ; and he contends that the word “freely” “implies that forgiveness is the free gift of God, and proceeds from his essential goodness and mercy, without regard to any foreign consideration whatever.” It is singular, however, that the position, as Dr. Priestley has put it in the above quotations, refutes itself ; for even he restricts the exercise of this mercy of God to “the truly penitent,” to “them who repent and reform their lives.” Forgiveness, therefore, is not, even according to him and his followers, free in the sense of being unconditional ; and at the very time he asserts that pardon is bestowed by God, “without regard to any consideration whatever foreign to his essential goodness and mercy,” he acknowledges that it is regulated, in its exercise, by the consideration of the penitence or non-penitence of the guilty, who are the subjects of it. From which the contradictory conclusion follows, that, in bestowing mercy, God has respect to a consideration foreign to his goodness and mercy, even the penitence of man ; so that there is, in the mode of dispensing mercy, a reserve and limitation on the part of God.

\* History of the Corruptions.



Thus, then, unless they would let in all kinds of license by preaching an unconditional pardon, the Socinians are obliged to acknowledge, that a thing may be done freely, which is, nevertheless, not done unconditionally. For, as it was replied of old to Socinus, whom Dr. Priestley follows in this objection, If this be not acknowledged, then the grossest Antinomianism is the true doctrine. For, if forgiveness of sin can only be accounted a free gift by being dependent upon no condition, and subject to no restrictions, it follows, that the repentance and amendment of the offender himself are no more to be regarded than the sufferings and merit of any other being; and, consequently, that all sinners, without reserve or limitation, have an equal claim to pardon, whether they repent, or not. If, to avoid this consequence, it be said that God is free to choose the objects to whom he will show mercy, and to impose upon them such restrictions, and to require of them such qualifications, as he thinks fit; it may, then, with equal reason, be asserted, that he is also free to dispense his mercy for such reasons and by such methods as he, in his wisdom, shall determine to be most conducive to his own glory and the good of his creatures; and there is no reason whatever to be given why a regard to the sufferings or merit of another person should more destroy the freeness of the gift, than the requisition of certain qualifications in the object himself.\* Thus the argument urged in the objection proves as much against the objectors as it does against us; or, rather, it proves nothing against either: For the showing mercy to the guilty, by any method, was a matter in which Almighty God was perfectly free. He might have exacted the penalty of his violated law upon the sinning individual; and to forgive sin, in any manner, was, in him, therefore, an act of unspeakable grace and favour. Again: From the mode and limitation of dispensing this grace and favour, he derives no advantage in the whole transaction; (for the gratification of his own benevolence is not a question of interest;) both in the mercy dispensed, and in the mode, the benefit of the creature is kept in view; nor could the

persons pardoned furnish any part of the consideration on which they are pardoned, or, of themselves, perform the conditions required of them; so that, for all these reasons, the pardon of man is a free gift, and its mode of being dispensed is the proof that it is so, and not a proof to the contrary.

But the very passage of St. Paul, to which Dr. Priestley refers, when he contends that the doctrine of the New Testament is, “that forgiveness is the free gift of God, and proceeds from his essential goodness and mercy, without regard to any foreign consideration whatever,” refutes his inference. The passage is, “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” The same doctrine is taught in other passages; and so far is it from being true that no reference is made to any consideration beyond the mere goodness and mercy of God, that consideration is stated in so many express words,—“through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;” of which redemption the blood of Christ is the price, as taught in the texts above commented on. But though it was convenient, in order to render a bold assertion more plausible, to keep this out of sight, a little reflection might have shown that the argument built upon the word “freely,” the term used by the Apostle, proceeds upon an entire mistake. The expression has reference to ourselves and to our own exertions in the work of justification, not to any thing which has been done by another in our behalf; and it is here used to denote the manner in which the blessing is bestowed, not the means by which it was procured. “Being justified freely by his grace,”—“freely,” *δωρεαν*, in the way of a gift unmerited by us, and not as the reward for our worthiness or desert; agreeably to the assertion of the Apostle in another place, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” “To be justified,” is to be pardoned, and treated as righteous in the sight of God, and to be admitted thus into his favour. But man, in his fallen state, had nothing in himself, and could do nothing of himself, by which he might merit, or claim as his due, so great a benefit. Having, therefore, no pretensions to real righteousness, our absolution from

the guilt of sin, and our admission to the character and privileges of righteous persons, must be imputed, not to our merit, but to the grace of God ; it is an act of mercy which we must acknowledge and receive as a free gift, and not demand as a just reward. Nor do the means by which our justification was effected alter its nature in any respect as a gift, or in the least diminish its freedom. "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ ;" but this redemption was not procured by us, nor provided at our expense. It was the result of the pure love of God, who, compassionating our misery, himself provided the means of our deliverance, by sending his only-begotten Son into the world, who voluntarily submitted to die upon the cross, that he might become the propitiation for our sins, and reconcile us to God. Thus is the whole an entire act of mercy on the part of God and Christ ; begun and completed for our benefit, but without our intervention ; and, therefore, with respect to us, the pardon of sin must still be accounted a free gift, though it comes to us through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Equally unfounded is the argument built upon the passages in which the forgiveness of sins is represented under the notion of the free remission of a debt ; in which act, it is said, there is no consideration of atonement and satisfaction. When sin is spoken of as a debt, a metaphor is plainly employed ; and it would be a novel rule to interpret what is plainly literal by what is metaphorical. There is, undoubtedly, something in the act of forgiving sin which is common with the act of remitting a debt by a creditor, or there would be no foundation for the metaphor ; but it can by no means legitimately follow, that the remission of sins is, in all its circumstances, to be interpreted by all the circumstances which accompany the free remission of a debt. We know, on the contrary, that remission of sins is not unconditional ; repentance and faith are required in order to it, which is acknowledged by the Socinians themselves. But this acknowledgment is fatal to the argument they would draw from the instances in the New Testament, in which Almighty God is represented as a merciful



creditor freely forgiving his insolvent debtors; for if the act of remitting sins be in all respects like the act of forgiving debts, then indeed can neither repentance, nor faith, nor condition of any kind, be insisted upon in order to forgiveness; since, in the instances referred to, the debtors were discharged without any expressed condition at all. But something, also, previous to our repentance and faith is constantly connected in the holy Scriptures of the New Testament with the very offer of forgiveness. "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day," that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." It was necessary, as we have already seen, that the one should take place before the other could be announced; and some degree of necessity is allowed in the case even by the Socinian hypothesis, although a very subordinate one. But if by an act of prerogative alone, unfettered by any considerations of justice and right, as is a creditor when he freely forgives a debt, God forgives sins, then there could be no necessity of any conceivable kind for "Christ to suffer;" and the offer of remission of sins would, in that case, have been wholly independent of his sufferings, which is contrary to the text. In perfect accordance with the above passage, is that in Acts xiii. 38, where it is said, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man" (*δια τούτου*, "through the means of this man") "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Here the same means as those before mentioned by St. Luke are obviously referred to,—the death and resurrection of Christ. Still more expressly our Lord declares, that his blood is "the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;" (Matt. xxvi. 28;) where he plainly makes his blood the procuring cause of that remission, and a necessary libation in order to its being attainable. Our redemption is said, by St. Paul, (Eph. i. 7,) to be "through his blood," and this redemption he explains to be "the remission of our sins;" and in writing to the Hebrews, he lays it down, as that very principle of the Old Testament dispensation which made it typical of the New, that "without shedding of blood there was no remission."



This remission is, nevertheless, for the reasons given above, always represented as a free act of the divine mercy; for the Apostles saw no inconsistency in giving to it this free and gracious character on the one hand, and on the other, proclaiming that that free and adorable mercy was called into exercise by the "chastisement of our sins being laid upon Christ;" and thus, by uniting both, they broadly and infallibly distinguish "the act of a lawgiver, who in forgiving sins has respect to the authority of the law, and the act of a creditor, who, in remitting a debt, disposes of his property at his pleasure."

But although no criticism can be more fallacious than to interpret the forgiveness of sins, which is a plain and literal transaction, by a metaphor, or a parable, which may have either too few or too many circumstances interwoven with it for just illustration, when applied beyond, or contrary to, its intention, the reason of the metaphor is at once obvious and beautiful. The verb *αφίημι* is the word commonly used for the remission of sins and the remission of debts. It signifies, "to send away," "to dismiss;" and is accommodated to both these acts. The ideas of absolute right in one party, and of binding obligation on the other, hold good equally as to the lawgiver and the transgressor, the creditor and the debtor. The lawgiver has a right to demand obedience, the creditor to demand his property; the transgressor of law is under the bond of its penalty, the debtor is under the obligation of repayment or imprisonment. This is the basis of the comparison between debts of money, and obligations of obedience to a lawgiver; and the same word is equally well applied to express the cancelling of each, though, except in the respects just stated, they are transactions and relations very different from each other. Every sin involves an obligation to punishment; and when sin is dismissed, sent away, or, in other words, forgiven, the liability to punishment is removed, just as when a debt is dismissed, sent away, or, in other words, remitted, the obligation of repayment, and, in default of that, the obligation of imprisonment, or, according to the ancient law, of being sold as a slave, is removed with it. So far the

resemblance goes ; but the Scriptures themselves, by connecting pardon of sin with a previous atonement, prevent it from being carried farther. And, indeed, the reason of the case sufficiently shows the difference between the remitting of a debt, which is the act of a private man, and the pardon of transgressions against a public law, which is the act of a Magistrate ; between an act which affects the private interests of one, and an act which, in its bearing upon the authority of the public law and the protection and welfare of society, affects the interests of many ; in a word, between an act which is a matter of mere feeling, and in which rectoral justice can have no place, and one which must be harmonized with rectoral justice ; for compassion to the guilty can never be the leading principle of government.

6. The nature of the death of Christ is still further explained in the New Testament, by the manner in which it connects our justification with faith in the blood of Christ, the sufferings which he endured in our stead ; and both our justification, and the death of Christ as its meritorious cause, with “the righteousness of God.” According to the testimony of the whole of the evangelical writers, the justification of man is an act of the highest grace, a manifestation of the superlative and ineffable love of God ; and yet, at the same time, is a strictly righteous proceeding.

These views, scattered throughout the books of the New Testament, are summed up in the following explicit language of St. Paul :—“ Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii. 24—26.) The argument of the Apostle is exceedingly lucid. He treats of man’s justification before God, of which he mentions two methods. The first is by our own obedience to the law of God, on the principle of all righteous law, that obedience secures exemption from punishment ; or, as he expresses it, “ For Moses describ-

eth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them." (Rom. x. 5.) This method of justification he proves to be impossible to man in his present state of degeneracy, and from the actual transgressions of Jews and Gentiles, on account of which the whole world is guilty before God; and he therefore lays it down as an incontrovertible maxim, that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," since "by the law is the knowledge of sin," for which it provides no remedy. The other method is justification by the grace of God, as a free gift; but coming to us through the intervention of the death of Christ, as our redemption-price; and received instrumentally by our faith in him. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." He then immediately adds, "Whom God hath set forth," openly exhibited and publicly announced, "to be a propitiation;" to be the person through whose voluntary and vicarious sufferings he is reconciled to sinful man, and by whom he will justify all who through faith confide in the virtue of his blood, shed for the remission of sins. But this public announcement and setting forth of Christ as a propitiation was not only for a declaration of the divine mercy, but pardon was offered to men in this method, to declare the "righteousness of God, *εις ενδειξιν δικαιοσυνης αυτου*, for a demonstration of his righteousness or justice," in the remission of past sins; "that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,"—that he might show himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous in the administration of his government, even whilst he justifies the offender that believes in Jesus. The Socinian Version renders the clause, "to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," "to show his method of justification concerning the remission of past sins." Even then the strict rectoral justice of the act of justifying sinners through faith in the blood of Christ, is expressed by the following clause, "that he might be just;" but the sense of the whole passage requires the literal rendering, "to declare his justice, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Some have, indeed, taken the word *δικαιος*, "just," in the sense of "mer-



ciful ;” but this is wholly arbitrary. It occurs, says Whitby, above eighty times in the New Testament, and not once in that sense.\* The sense just given is confirmed by all the ancient versions ; and it is, indeed, put beyond the reach of verbal criticism by the clause, “ by the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” For, whatever view we take of this clause, whether we refer it to the sins of men before the coming of Christ, or to the past sins of one who is at any time justified, the *παρεσις*, or “ passing by,” of sins, or, if the common rendering please better, “ the remission of sins,” and “ the forbearance of God,” are acts of obvious mercy ; and to say that thus the mercy of God is manifested, is tautological and identical ; whereas past sins not punished through the forbearance of God, without a public atonement, might have brought the justice of God into question, but certainly not his mercy. It was the justice of the proceeding, therefore, that needed a demonstration, and not the mercy of it. This, too, is the obvious reason for the repetition so emphatically used by the Apostle, and which is no otherwise to be accounted for : “ To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness ;” “ at this time,” now that Christ has actually appeared to pay the ransom, and to become the publicly-announced propitiation for sin ; God cannot now appear otherwise than just, although he justifies him that believeth in Jesus. Similar language is also used by St. John : “ He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” (1 John i. 9.) So that the grand doctrine of Christianity is unequivocally stated by both Apostles to be, that, according to its constitution, the forgiveness of sin is at once an act of mercy and an act of justice, or of strictly righteous government. Neither the Socinian nor the Arian hypothesis at all harmonizes with this principle ; on the contrary, they both directly contradict it, and cannot, therefore, be true.

\* See Nares’s Remarks on the New Version ; Magee On the Atonement ; Whitby and Doddridge *in loc.* “ Righteousness ” is, indeed, sometimes used for “ veracity ;” but only when some principle of equity, or some obligation arising from engagement, promise, or threat is implied.



They make the forgiveness of sin, indeed, an act of mercy ; but with them it is impossible that it should comport with justice, because sin receives not its threatened punishment ; the penalty of the law is not exacted ; the offender meets with entire impunity ; and the divine administration, so far from being a righteous one, has, according to their system, no respect to either truth or righteousness ; and, so far as offences against the divine law are concerned, that law is reduced to a dead letter.

But in Scripture the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, is not only asserted to be a demonstration of the righteousness of God in a case which might seem to bring it into question, but the particular steps and parts of this “ demonstration ” are, by its light, easy to be traced. For,

1. The law, the rule of the divine government, is by this means established in its authority and perpetuity. The hypothesis which rejects the doctrine of the atonement repeals the law by giving impunity to transgression ; for if punishment does not follow offence, or no other term of pardon be required than one which the culprit has it always in his own power, at once, to offer, (which we have seen is the case with the repentance of the Socinians as the only condition of forgiveness,) then is the law, as to its authority, virtually repealed, and the divine government, over rebellious creatures, annihilated. The Christian doctrine of atonement, on the contrary, is, that sin cannot go unpunished in the divine administration ; and therefore the authority of the law is established by this absolute and everlasting denial of impunity to transgression.

2. Whether we take the righteousness or justice of God for that holiness and rectitude of his nature from which his punitive justice flows ; or for the latter, which consists in exacting the penalty righteously and wisely attached to offences against the divine law ; or for both united as the stream and the fountain ; it is demonstrated, by the refusal of impunity to sin, that God is this holy and righteous Being, this strict and exact Governor. On any other theory, there is no manifestation of God’s hatred of sin answering at all to that intense holiness of his nature,

which must lead him to abhor it ; and no proof of his rectoral justice as Governor of the world. Mercy is, according to them all, administered on a mere principle of feeling, without any regard to holiness or justice whatever.

3. The doctrine which connects the pardon of the guilty with the meritorious death of Christ, illustrates the attribute of divine justice, by the very act of connecting and blending it with the attribute of love, and the exercise of an effectual compassion. At the time that it guards, with so much care, the doctrine of non-impunity to sin, it offers impunity to the sinner ; but then the medium through which this offer is made serves to heighten the impression of God's hatred to sin, and the inflexible character of his justice. The person appointed to suffer the punishment of sin and the penalty of the law for us, was not a mere human being, not a creature of any kind, however exalted, but the Son of God ; and in him Divinity and humanity were united in one person, so that he was " God manifested in the flesh," assuming our nature, in order that he might offer it in death a sacrifice to God. If this was necessary, and we have already proved it to have been so in the strictest sense, then is sin declared by the strongest demonstration we can conceive, to be an evil of immeasurable extent ; and the justice of God is, by a demonstration of equal force, declared to be inflexible and inviolable,—God " spared not his own Son."

Here, indeed, it has been objected by Socinus and his followers, that the dignity of a person adds nothing to the estimation of his sufferings. The common opinion of mankind, in all ages, is, however, a sufficient refutation of this objection ; for, in proportion to the excellence of the creatures immolated in sacrifice have the value and efficacy of oblations been estimated by all people ; which notion, when perverted, made them sometimes resort to human sacrifices, in cases of great extremity : And, surely, if the principle of substitution existed in the penal law of any human government, it would be universally felt to make a great difference in the character of the law, whether an honourable or a mean substitute were accepted in place of the guilty. It would have greatly changed the

character of the act of Zaleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, before mentioned, and placed the estimation in which he held his own laws, and the degree of strictness with which he was determined to uphold them, in a very different light, if, instead of parting with one of his own eyes, to save the remaining eye of his son, he had ordered the eye of some base slave, or of a malefactor, to be plucked out. But without entering into this, the notion will be explicitly refuted, if we turn to the testimony of holy writ itself, in which the dignity and Divinity of our Lord are so often emphatically referred to as stamping that value upon his sacrifice, as giving that consideration to his voluntary sufferings on our account, which we usually express by the term of "his merits." In Acts xx. 28, as God, he is said to have "purchased the church with his own blood." In Col. i. 14, 15, we are said to have "redemption through his blood, who is the image of the invisible God." In 1 Cor. ii. 8, "The Lord of glory" is said to have been crucified. St. Peter emphatically calls the blood of Christ "precious blood;" and St. Paul dwells particularly upon this peculiarity, when he contrasts the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifices of the law, and when he ascribes to his blood a purifying efficacy which he denies to the blood of bulls and of goats: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" By the argument of Socinus there could be no difference between the blood of animals, shed under the law, as to value and efficacy, and the blood of Christ; which is directly in the teeth of the declaration and argument of the Apostle, who also asserts, that the "patterns of things in the heavens" were purified by animal sacrifices; "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these," namely, the oblation of Christ.

To another objection of Socinus, that because the Divinity itself suffers not, therefore it does not enter into this consideration of punishment, Grotius well replies, "This is as much as to say that it is an offence of the same kind whether you strike a private person or a King, a stranger or a father, because



blows are directed against the body, not against dignity or relationship.”\*

4. In further considering this subject, as illustrating the inherent and the rectoral righteousness of God, we are to recollect that, although by the atonement made for the sins of mankind by the death of Christ, all men, antecedently to their repentance and faith, are, to use the language of Divines, put into “a salvable state,” yet none of them are, by this act of Christ, brought from under the authority of the moral law. This remains in its full and original force; and, as they all continue under the original obligation of obedience, so, in case of those conditions not being complied with on which the actual communication of the benefit of redemption has been made to depend, those who neglect the great salvation offered to them by Christ fall under the full original penalty of the law, and are left to the malediction, without obstruction to the exercise and infliction of divine justice. Nor, with respect to those who perform the conditions required of them, and who, by faith in Christ, are justified, and thus escape punishment, is there any repeal, or even relaxation, of the authority of the law of God. The end of justification is not to set men free from law, but from punishment; for, concomitant with justification, though distinct from it, is the communication of the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, by which the corrupt and invalid nature of man is restored to the love of holiness and the power to practise it, and thus the law of God becomes his constant rule, and the measure of that holiness to which, when this new creation has taken place, he vigorously aspires: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Not, indeed, that this obedience, which, in the present life, is in some respects imperfect, and

\* *Quod autem Socinus argumentatur, quia divinitas ipsa non patitur, ideo hanc in pænæ considerationem non venire; perinde est ac si dicas, nihil referre privatum an Regem, item ignotum an patrem verberes, quia verbera in corpus dirigantur, non in dignitatem, aut cognationem.—De Satisfactione.*



in every degree the result of the operation of God within us, can, after this change, be the rule of our continued justification and acceptance: That will rest, from first to last, upon the atonement of Christ, pleaded in our behalf; so that if any man again sin, "he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" But true faith leads, by an inseparable connexion, both to justification and to regeneration; and they who, as the Apostle argues, (Rom. vi. 2,) are thus "dead to sin, cannot continue any longer therein," but yield willing obedience to the law of God. The rule of God, the authority of his law, is thus re-established over his creatures, and the strictness of a righteous government is united with the exercise of a tender mercy.

Thus, then, in the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, we see how "the righteousness," the essential and the rectoral justice, of God is manifested. There is no impunity to sin; and yet the impunity to the sinner, through faith in the blood of Christ, does not repeal, does not lower, but establish, the law of God. These views will also enable us to attach an explicit meaning to the theological term, "the satisfaction made to divine justice," by which the nature of Christ's atonement is often expressed. This is not a word of holy writ; but is not, on that account, to be rejected, since, like many others, it has been found useful as a guard against subtle evasions of the doctrine of Scripture, and in giving explicitness, not, indeed, to the language of inspiration, but to the sense in which that language is interpreted.

The two following views of satisfaction may be given as most prevalent among those Divines who hold the doctrine of the atonement of Christ.

The first may be thus epitomised:—

The justice of God being concerned to vindicate his laws, and to inflict upon offenders the due reward of their evil deeds, it is agreed that, without proper satisfaction, sin could not be forgiven. For, as sin is opposite to the purity and holiness of God, and, consequently, cannot but provoke his displeasure; and as justice is essential to the divine nature, and exists there in a supreme degree, it must inflexibly require the punishment

of those who are thus objects of his wrath. The satisfaction, therefore, made by the death of Christ consisted in his taking the place of the guilty, and in his sufferings and death being, from the dignity of his nature, regarded by the offended Lawgiver, as a full equivalent and adequate compensation for the punishment, by death, of the personally guilty.

The second opinion does not assume the absolute necessity of a satisfaction to divine justice, but chiefly insists upon the wisdom and fitness of the measure, arguing, that it became the Almighty Governor of the universe to consult the honour of his law, and not to suffer it to be violated with impunity, lest his subjects should call in question his justice. Accordingly, he sent his own Son into the world, who, by dying for our sins, obtained our release from punishment ; and, at the same time, made an honourable display of the righteousness of God. In a word, Christ is supposed, in this opinion, to have made satisfaction for our sins, not because his death is to be accounted an adequate compensation, or a full equivalent for the remission of punishment ; but because his suffering in our stead maintained the honour of the divine law, and yet gave free scope to the mercy of the Lawgiver.

Both these opinions have great names for their advocates ; but the reader will feel, that there is too much indistinctness in the terms and phrases in which they are expressed for either of them to be received as a satisfactory enunciation of this important doctrine. The first opinion, though greatly to be preferred, and, with proper explanations, just, is defective in not explaining what is meant by the terms, “a full equivalent” and “an adequate compensation.” The second is objectionable, as appearing to refer the atonement more to wisdom and fitness as an expedient, than to wisdom and fitness in close and inseparable connexion with justice ; and is defective in not pointing out what that connexion is between the death of Christ and that honouring of the law of God which allows of the remission of punishment to offenders, of which they speak. Each embodies much truth, and yet both are capable of originating great and fatal errors, unless their terms be definitely and scripturally understood.

To clear this subject, some further observations will, then, be necessary.

The term "satisfaction" is taken from the Roman law, and signifies to "content a person aggrieved," by doing or by offering something which procures liberation from the obligation of debts or the penalties of offences; not *ipso facto*, but by the will of the aggrieved party admitting this substitution. *Ea dictio (satisfaciendi vocabulum) in jure et usu communi significat facti alicujus aut rei exhibitionem, ex quâ non quidem ipso facto, sed accedente voluntatis actu liberatio sequatur; soletque non tantum in pecuniariis debitis, sed et in delictis hoc sensu usurpari, quod lingue ex Romanâ depravatæ appellant, aliquem contentare.\** So the Roman lawyer Caius, *Satisfacere dicimur ei cujus desiderium implemus*, "We are said to satisfy him whose desires we fulfil." Ulpian opposes satisfaction to payment,—*satisfactio pro solutione*; and, in criminal cases, Asconius lays it down as a rule, *Satisfacere, est tantum facere, quantum satis sit irato ad vindictam*, "To satisfy is to do as much as, to the party offended, may be enough in the way of vengeance."† It is from this use of the term that it has been adopted into theology; and, however its meaning may have been heightened or lowered by the advocates of different systems, it is plain that, by the term itself, nothing is indicated, but the contentment of the injured party by any thing which he may choose to accept in the place of the enforcement of his obligation upon the party indebted or offending. The sense in which it must be applied to designate the nature and effect of the death of Christ, in consistency with the views we have already taken, is obvious. We call the death of Christ "a satisfaction offered to divine justice for the transgressions of men," with reference to its effect upon the mind of the supreme Lawgiver. As a just Governor, he is satisfied, contented, with the atonement offered by the vicarious death of his Son, and the conditions on which it is to become available to the offenders; and their punishment, those conditions being accomplished, is no longer exacted.

\* Grotius *De Satisfactione*.

† Vide Chapman's Eusebius.



This effect upon the mind of the Lawgiver is not, as the Socinians would pervert the doctrine, the satisfaction of an angry vengeful affection, as we have before shown; but, according to the very phrase employed in all cases, and which is sufficient to show that their perversion of our meaning is wilful, “a satisfaction” or “contentment” of his justice, which can only rationally mean the satisfaction of the mind of a just or righteous governor, who is nevertheless disposed, from the goodness of his nature, to show mercy to the guilty, and who can now do it consistently with the rectitude of his character, and the authority of those laws which it is the office of punitive justice to uphold. The satisfaction of divine justice by the death of Christ consists, therefore, in this,—that a wise and gracious provision on the part of the Father having been voluntarily carried into effect by the Son, the just God has determined it to be as consistent with his own holy and righteous character, and the ends of law and government, to forgive all who have true “faith in the blood of Christ,” the appointed propitiation for sin, as though they had all been personally punished for their transgressions.

The death of Christ, then, is the satisfaction accepted; and this being a satisfaction to justice, that is, a consideration which satisfied God as a Being essentially righteous, and as having strict and inflexible respect to the justice of his government; pardon through, or for the sake of, that death became, in consequence, “a declaration of the righteousness of God,” as the only appointed method of remitting the punishment of the guilty: And if so, satisfaction respects not, in the first instance, according to the second opinion we have stated above, the honour of the law of God, but its authority, and the upholding of that righteous and holy character of the Lawgiver and of his administration, of which that law is the visible and public expression. Nor is this to be regarded as a merely wise and fit expedient of government, a point to which even Grotius leans too much, as well as many other Divines who have adopted the second opinion; for this may imply that it was one of many other possible expedients, though the best; whereas we have seen, that it is every where in Scripture



represented as necessary to human salvation ; and that no alternative existed but that of exchanging a righteous government for one careless and relaxed, to the dishonour of the divine attributes, and the sanctioning of moral disorder ; or the upholding of such a government by the personal and extreme punishment of every offender ; or else the acceptance of the vicarious death of an infinitely dignified and glorious Being, through whom pardon should be offered, and in whose hands a process for the moral restoration of the lapsed should be placed. The humiliation, sufferings, and death of such a Being did most obviously demonstrate the righteous character and administration of God ; and if the greatest means we can conceive was employed for this end, then we may safely conclude, that the righteousness of God, in the forgiveness of sin, could not have been demonstrated by inferior means ; and as God cannot cease to be a righteous Governor, man, in that case, could have had no hope.

The advocates of the second opinion not only speak of the honour of the divine law being concerned in this transaction, but of the maintenance of the justice of God ; in which they come substantially to an agreement with those who hold the first opinion ; and, if so, there appears no reason to except to such phrases as “ a full equivalent ” and “ an adequate compensation,” when soberly interpreted. An “ equivalent ” is something of equal value, or of equal force and power, to something else ; but here the value spoken of is judicial value, that which is to weigh equally in the mind of a wise, benevolent, and yet strictly righteous, Governor ; and if the death of Christ for sinners was determined, in his infallible judgment, to be as equal a demonstration of his justice, as the personal and extreme punishment of offenders themselves, it was, in this judicial consideration of the matter, of equal weight, and therefore of equal value, as a means of righteous government ; for which reason, also, it was of equal force, or power, or cogency, another leading sense of the term “ equivalent.” So also, as to the term “ compensation,” which signifies the weighing of one thing against another, the making amends. If this be interpreted, as the former, judicially, the death of Christ

for sinners is an adequate compensation for their personal punishment, in the estimation of divine justice ; because it is, at least, an equally powerful demonstration of the righteousness of God, who only in consideration of that atonement forgives the sins of offending men.

Just, however, and significant as these phrases are when thus interpreted, one reason why they have been objected to by some orthodox Divines is, that they have been used in support of the Antinomian doctrine. On this account they have been by some wholly rejected, and a loose and dangerous phraseology introduced, when the reason of the case only required that they should be explained. The Antinomian perversion of them may here be briefly refuted, though that doctrine may afterwards come under our more direct consideration.

In the first place, the Antinomians connect the satisfaction of Christ with the doctrine of the imputation of his active righteousness to believers. With them, therefore, the satisfaction of Christ means his performing for us that obedience which we were bound to perform. They consider our Lord as a proxy for men ; so that his perfect obedience to the law should be esteemed by God as done by them, as theirs in legal construction ; and that his perfect righteousness, being imputed to them, renders them legally righteous and sinless. The plain answer to this is, 1. That we have no such office ascribed in Scripture to the active righteousness of Christ, which is only spoken of there in connexion with his atonement, as rendering him a fit victim or sacrifice for sin : “ He died, the just for the unjust.” 2. That this doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s obedience makes his sufferings superfluous. For if he has done all that the law required of us, and if this is legally accounted as our doing, then are we under no liability to suffer, and his suffering in our stead was more than the law and the case required. 3. That this involves a fiction opposed to the ends of moral government, and shuts out the obligation of personal obedience to the law of God : So far, therefore, is it from being “ a demonstration of God’s righteousness,” his rectoral justice, that it transfers the obligation of obedience from the subjects of the divine government to

Christ, and leaves man without law, and God without dominion; which is obviously contrary to the Scriptures, and favourable to license of every kind. 4. This is not satisfaction in any good sense; it is merely the performance of all that the law requires, by one person substituted for another.

Again: The terms, "full satisfaction" and "full equivalent," are taken by the Antinomians in the sense of the payment of debts by a surety, for him who has not the means of payment; as though sins were quite analogous to civil debts. This proceeds upon the mistake of confounding the cancelling of a debt of judicial obligation, with the payment of a debt of money. We have already seen the difference between the relation of a sinner to his offended Judge and Sovereign, and that of a pecuniary debtor to a creditor, and have pointed out the basis of the metaphor, when it occurs as a figurative representation in Scripture. Such payment would not be satisfaction in the proper sense, which stands opposed to payment, and means the acceptance of something in the place of what is due, with which the lawgiver is content. Nor can any such sense be forced upon the term; for we have no such representation in Scripture of the death of Christ, as that it is, in principle, like the payment of so many talents or pounds by one person, for so many talents or pounds owing by another, and which thereby cancels all future obligation. His atoning act consisted in suffering "the just for the unjust;" neither in doing just so many holy acts as we were bound to do, nor in suffering the precise quantum of pain which we deserved to suffer, (neither of which appears in the nature of things to be even possible,) but doing and suffering that which, by reason of the peculiar glory and dignity of the person thus coming under the bond of the law, both as to obedience and suffering, was accounted by God to be a sufficient "demonstration of his righteousness," in showing mercy to all who truly believe in him. And as this notion of payment in full and kind, by a surety, is contrary to the import of satisfaction, so also is it inconsistent with the import of the phrase, "a full equivalent." He who pays a civil debt in full for another does not render an equivalent, but gives precisely



what the original obligation required. So, if the obedience of Christ were equal in quantity and degree to all the acts of obedience due by men, and is to be accounted theirs, there is no equivalent offered; but the same thing is done, only it is done by another; and if the penal sufferings of Christ were, in nature, quantity, and intenseness, equal to the punishment of all sinners, in time and eternity, taken together, and are to be accounted their sufferings, no proper equivalent is offered in the case. The only true sense of the phrase, that the sufferings of Christ are a full equivalent for the remission of the punishment due to the guilty, is, that they equally availed in satisfying divine justice, and in vindicating the authority of the law; that they were equivalent, in the estimation of a Governor, just in the administration of his laws, to the punishment of the guilty; equivalent, in effect, to a legal satisfaction, which would consist in the enforcement, upon the persons of the offenders, of the penalty of the violated commandment.

Another consequence to which the Antinomian view leads is, that it makes the justification of men a matter of right, not of grace. When the doctrine of satisfaction is properly stated, we can easily answer the infidel and Socinian objection, that it destroys the free and gracious nature of an act of forgiveness. For, not to urge again what has before been advanced, that the Father was the fountain of this mercy, and “gave” the Son; the satisfaction was *quid recusabile*, or such as God might have refused. For if the laws under which God had placed us were “holy, just, and good,” which is their real character, and if the penalties attached to their violation were righteous, which must also be conceded, then it would have been righteous, every way consistent with the glory of God, and with all the perfections of his nature, to have enforced the penalty. The satisfaction offered might not be unjust in him to accept; and yet he was clearly under no obligation to accept it, could it have been offered independent of himself, much less could he be under any obligation to provide it. The offender could have no right to claim such a provision; and it depended, therefore, solely on the will of God, and, as such, was an act of the highest grace.



Again: The forgiveness of sinners, through an atonement, is not that which can be claimed as a matter of right. It is made to consist with law, but is not in any sense by law. However valuable the atonement, yet, independent of the favour and grace of the Lawgiver, it could not have obtained our pardon. Both must concur in order to this, the kindness and compassion of the Being offended inducing him to accept satisfaction, and such a satisfaction as would render it morally fit and honourable in him to offer forgiveness. "By grace," therefore, we "are saved;" and nothing that Christ has done renders us not deserving of punishment, or cancels our obligations as creatures and subjects, as a surety cancels the obligations of a debtor whose debt he pays for him. Forgiveness in God can, therefore, be no other than an act of high and distinguished mercy.

We are also to consider, even now that the atonement has been accepted, and the promise of forgiveness proclaimed, upon the conditions of repentance and faith, that we claim forgiveness, not on the ground of justice, but on that of the faithfulness of God, who has been pleased to bind himself by promises; and also that the mercy and grace of God are further illustrated by his not proceeding to extremities against us upon our first refusals of his overtures, of which all are in some degree guilty. He exercises towards us, in every instance, "all long-suffering;" and calls us not hastily to account for our neglect of the Gospel, any more than for the infractions of his law, both which he might do, were his government severe, and his mercy reluctant.

But abundantly as the objection may thus be answered, it is not to be satisfactorily refuted, on the Antinomian principle that Christ paid our debt, in the sense of yielding to the law, in kind and in quantity, those acts of obedience, or that penalty of suffering, or both, which the law required. The matter, in that case, on the part of the Father, loses its character of grace, and is reduced to a strictly equitable proceeding; or at least the mercy is of no higher a kind than is the mercy of a creditor who accepts the full amount of his debt from the surety instead of the debtor, which is assuredly much below that love of the

Father to which allusions so admiring and so grateful are often made in the New Testament. The consequences, also, become absurd and wholly contradictory to the Scriptures. Such a view of the satisfaction of Christ is inconsistent with conditions of pardon and acceptance ; for if the debt is in this sense actually tendered and accepted, on what ground can conditions of release be enforced ? It is, therefore, consistent in the Antinomian scheme, to deny all conditions of pardon and acceptance, and to make repentance and faith merely the means through which men come to the knowledge of their previous and eternal election. By them, as fulfilled conditions, their relation to God is not changed ; so that from guilty and condemned criminals they become sons of God : Such they were previous to faith, and previous even to birth ; and thus the Scripture is contradicted, which represents believers, before repentance and faith, to be “ the children of wrath, even as others.” That passage also in Galatians loses its meaning : “ We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.”

With such explanations of the terms of the first of the two opinions on the satisfaction of Christ, above given, it may be taken as fully accordant with the doctrine of the New Testament on this important subject.

Another remark may here be in its proper place. It has been sometimes said by theologians, sufficiently sound in their general views of the doctrine of the atonement, that we know not the *vinculum*, or bond of connexion, between the sufferings of Christ and the pardon of sin : This, therefore, they place among the mysteries of religion. But this appears rather to arise from obscure views of the atonement, than from the absence of information on this point in the Scriptures themselves. Mysteries of love, and incomprehensible facts, are found, it is true, in the incarnation, humiliation, and sufferings of our Lord ; but the *vinculum*, or connexion, of those sufferings with our pardon, appears to be matter of express revelation : It is declared, that the death of Christ was “ a demonstration of the righteousness of God,” of his righteous character and his just administration ; and therefore allowed the exercise

of mercy without impeachment of justice, or any repeal or relaxation of the law. If it be meant, by this allegation of mystery, that it is not discoverable how the death of Christ is as adequate a display of the justice of God, as though offenders had been personally punished, this also is clearly in opposition to what the Apostle has said, in the passage which has been so often referred to, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness," *εις ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αυτου*, "for a demonstration, or manifestation, of his righteousness;" nor surely can the particulars before stated, in explanation of this point, be well weighed, without our perceiving how gloriously the holiness and essential rectitude of God, as well as his rectoral justice, were illustrated by this proceeding: Here, surely, is manifestation, not mystery.

For, generally speaking, it cannot be a matter of difficulty to conceive how the authority of a law may be upheld, and the justice of its administration made manifest, even when its penalty is exacted in some other way than the punishment of the party offending. When the Locrian legislator voluntarily suffered the loss of one of his eyes, to save that of his son condemned by his own statutes to lose both, and did this that the law might neither be repealed nor exist without efficacy; who does not see that the authority of his laws was as much, nay, more, impressively sanctioned than if his son had endured the full penalty? The case, it is true, has in it nothing parallel to the work of Christ, except in that particular which it is here adduced to illustrate; but it shows that it is not, in all cases, necessary for the upholding of a firm government, that the offender himself should be punished. This is the natural mode of maintaining authority; but not, in all cases, the only one; and, in that of the redemption of man, we see the wisdom of God in its brightest manifestation, securing this end, and yet opening to man the door of hope. The strict justice of the case required that the righteous character of the divine administration should be upheld; but, in fact, by the sufferings of our Lord being made the only means of pardon, it has received a stamp more legible and impressive than the extreme



punishment of offenders, however awful, whilst it connects love with justice, and presents God to us at once exact in righteousness and affectingly gracious and merciful. "The Judge himself bore the punishment of transgression, whilst he published an amnesty to the guilty, and thus asserted the authority, and importance, and worth of the law by that very act which beamed forth love unspeakable, and displayed a compassion which knew no obstacle but the unwillingness of the criminals to accept it. The eternal Word became flesh ; and exhibited, in sufferings and in death, that combination of holiness and mercy which, believed, must excite love, and, if loved, must produce resemblance."\* "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Thus the *vinculum*, that which connects the death of Christ with our salvation, is simply the security which it gives to the righteous administration of the divine government.

An objection is made by the opponents of the doctrine of atonement to the justice of laying the punishment of the guilty upon the innocent. It will be necessary briefly to consider this. The objection resolves itself into an inquiry how far such benevolent interpositions of one person for another, as involve sacrifice and suffering, may go without violating justice ; and when the subject is followed in this direction, the objection will be found to be of no weight.

That it has always been held a virtue to endure inconveniences, to encounter danger, and even to suffer, for the sake of others, in certain circumstances, cannot be denied ; and no one has ever thought of controlling such acts by raising any questions as to their justice. Parents and friends not only endure labour and make sacrifices for their children and connexions, but often submit to positive pain in accomplishing that to which their affection prompts them. To save a fellow-creature perishing by water or fire, generous minds often expose themselves to great personal risk of life, and even sometimes perish in the attempt ; yet the claims of humanity are considered sufficient to justify such deeds, which are never blamed,

\* Erskine On Revealed Religion.



but always applauded. No man's life, we grant, is at his own disposal; but in all cases where it is agreed that God, the only Being who has a right to dispose of life, has left men at liberty to offer their lives for the benefit of others, no one questions the justice of their doing it. Thus, when a patriot army marches into certain danger to defend its coasts from foreign invasion and violence, the established notion, that the life of every man is placed by God at the disposal of his country, justifies the hazard. It is still a clearer instance, because matter of revelation, that there are cases in which we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, that is, for the church and the interests of religion in the world. Christians are called to pursue their duty of instructing, and reforming, and saving others, though, in some cases, the active services into which they may be led will shorten life; and in times of persecution it is obligatory upon them not only to be ready to suffer, but to die, rather than deny Christ. No one questions the justice of this, because all see that the Author and Lord of the life of man has given to them the right of thus disposing of their own; nor do we ever hear it urged, that it was unjust in him to require them to submit to the pain of racks, and fires, and other modes of violent death, which they certainly did not deserve, and when, as to any crime meriting public and ignominious death, they were, doubtless, innocent. These cases are not adduced as parallel to the death of Christ for sinners; but so far they agree with it, that, in the ordinary course of Providence, and by express appointment of God, men suffer and even die for the benefit of others, and in some cases the morally worthy, the comparatively innocent, die for the instruction, and, instrumentally, for the salvation, of the unworthy and vicious. There is a similarity in the two cases, also, in other particulars; as, that the suffering danger or death is, in both, matter of choice, not of compulsion or necessity; and that there is a right in the parties to choose suffering and death, though, as we shall see, this right in benevolent men is of a different kind from that with which Christ was invested.

Some writers of great eminence on the doctrine of atone-

ment have urged also, in answer to the objection before us, the suffering of persons in consequence of the sins of others, as children on account of the crimes of their parents, both by the natural constitution of things and by the laws of many states; but the subject does not appear to derive any real illustration from these examples; for, as a modern writer well observes. "The principles upon which the catholic opinion is defended destroy every kind of similarity between these cases and the sufferings of Christ. In all such instances of the extension of punishment, persons suffer for sins of which they are innocent, but without their consent, in consequence of a constitution under which they are born, and by a disposition of events which they probably lament; and their suffering is not supposed to have any effect in alleviating the evils incurred by those whose punishment they bear."\*

In all the cases mentioned above, as most in point in this argument, we grant that there is no instance of satisfaction by vicarious punishment; no legal substitution of one person for another. With respect to human governments, they could not justly adopt this principle in any case. They could not oblige an innocent person to suffer for the guilty, because that would be unjust to him; they could not accept his offer, were he ever so anxious to become the substitute of another, for that would be unjust to God, since they have no authority from him so to take away the life of one of his creatures, and the person himself has no right to offer it. With respect to the divine government, a parallel case is also impossible, because no guilty man could be the substitute for his fellows, his own life being forfeited; and that no higher creature could be that substitute we are fully assured by this, that if it was necessary that Christ, who is infinitely above all creatures, should suffer for us, in order that God might be just in justifying the guilty, then his justice could not have been manifested by the interposition of any creature whatever in our behalf, and therefore the legal obstacle to our pardon must have remained in full force. There can be no full parallel to this

singular and only case ; but yet, as to the question of justice, which is here the only point under consideration, it rests on the same principles as those before mentioned. In the case of St. Paul we see a willing sufferer ; he chooses to suffer and to die “ for the elect’s sake,” and that he might publish the Gospel to the world. He knew that this would be his lot, and he glories in the prospect. He gave up cheerfully what might have remained to him of life by the constitution of nature. Was it, then, unjust in God to accept this offering of generous devotedness for the good of mankind, when the offering was in obedience to his own will ? Certainly not. Was it an unjust act towards God, that is, did it violate the right of God over his life, for St. Paul to choose to die for the Gospel ? Certainly not. For God had given to him the right of thus disposing of his life, by making it his duty to die for the truth. The same considerations of choice and right unite in the sufferings of our Lord, though the case itself was one of an infinitely higher nature, a circumstance which strengthens but does not change the principle. He was a willing substitute, and choice was in him abundantly more free and unbiassed than it could be in a creature ; and for this reason, that he was not a creature. His incarnation was voluntary ; and, when incarnate, his sufferings were still a matter of choice ; nor was he, in the same sense as his disciples, under the power of men. “ No man taketh my life from me ; but I lay it down of myself.” He had the right of doing so in a sense that no creature could have. He died, not only because the Father willed it ; not because the right of living or dying had been conceded to him as a moral trust, as in the case of the Apostles ; but because, having himself the supreme power of life and death, from his boundless benevolence to man he willed to die ; and thus, in this substitution, there was a concurrence of the Lawgiver, and the consent of the Substitute. To say that any thing is unjust, is to say that the rights of some one are invaded ; but if, in this case, no right was invaded, (than which nothing can be more clear,) then was there in it nothing of injustice, as assumed in the objection. The whole resolves itself, therefore, into a question not of the justice, but of the



wisdom, of admitting a substitute to take the place of the guilty. In the circumstances, first, of the willingness of the substitute to submit to the penalty ; and, secondly, of his right thus to dispose of himself, the justice of the proceeding is fully cleared ; and the question of wisdom is to be determined by this consideration, whether the end of punishment could be as well answered by this translation of the penalty to a substitute as if the principals themselves had personally been held to undergo it. This, when the whole evangelical scheme is taken into account, embracing the means and conditions by which that substitution is made available, and the concomitants by which it is attended, as before explained, is also obvious,—the law of God is not repealed nor relaxed, but established ; those who continue disobedient fall into aggravated condemnation ; and those who avail themselves of the mercy of God thus conceded, are restored to the capacity and disposition of obedience, and that perfectly and eternally in a future state of existence ; so that, as the end of punishment is the maintenance of the authority of law and the character of the Lawgiver, this end is even more abundantly accomplished by this glorious interposition of the compassion and adorable wisdom of God our Saviour.

So unfounded, then, is this objection to the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Christ ; to which we may add, that the difficulty of reconciling those sufferings to the divine justice does not, in truth, lie with us, but with the Socinians. Different opinions, as to the nature and end of those sufferings, neither lessen nor heighten them. The extreme and emphatic sufferings of our Lord is a fact which stands unalterably upon the record of the inspired history. We who regard Christ as suffering by virtue of a voluntary substitution of himself in our room and stead, can account for such agonies, and, by the foregoing arguments, can reconcile them to justice ; but, as our Lord was perfectly and absolutely innocent, as he did no sin, and was, in this respect, distinguished from all men who ever lived, and who have all sinned, by being entirely holy and harmless, separated from sinners, how will they reconcile it to divine justice that he should be thus as pre-eminent in



suffering as he was in virtue, and when, according to them, he sustained a personal character only, and not a vicarious one? For this difficulty they have, and can have, no rational solution.

As to the passage in Ezekiel xviii. 20, which Socinians sometimes urge against the doctrine of Christ's vicarious passion, it is briefly but satisfactorily answered\* by Grotius: "Socinus objects from Ezekiel, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.' But in these words God does not teach us what he must necessarily do; but what [in a particular case] he had freely decreed to do. It no more, therefore, follows from hence, that it is unjust altogether for a son to bear any part of the punishment of his father's crime, than that it is unjust for a sinner not to die. The place itself evinces, that God does not here treat of perpetual and immutable right; but of that ordinary course of his providence which he was determined hereafter to pursue with respect to the Jews, that he might cut off all occasion of complaint."\*

\* *De Satisfactione.*

## CHAPTER XXI.

### *Redemption.—Sacrifices of the Law.*

IT has, then, been established, upon the testimony of various texts in which the doctrine is laid down, not in the language of metaphor and allusion, but clearly and expressly, that the death of Christ was vicarious and propitiatory; and that by it a satisfaction was offered to the divine justice for the transgressions of men, in consideration of which, pardon and salvation are offered to them in the Gospel through faith. I have preferred to adduce these clear and cogent proofs of this great principle of our religion, in the first place, from those passages in the New Testament in which there are no sacrificial terms, no direct allusions to the atonements of the law and other parts of the Levitical piacular system, to show, that, independent of the latter class of texts, the doctrine may be established against the Socinians; and, also, that, having first settled the meaning of several leading passages, we might more satisfactorily determine the sense in which the Evangelists and Apostles use the sacrificial terms of the Old Testament with reference to the death of Christ,—a subject on which the opponents of the atonement employ a freedom of remark, and a license of criticism, which are apt to mislead and perplex the unwary. This second class of texts, however, when approached by the light of the argument already made good, and exhibited also in that of their own evidence, will afford the most triumphant refutation of the notions of those who, to their denial of the Godhead of our Lord, add a proud and Pharisaic rejection of the sacrificial efficacy of his death.

We shall not, in the first instance, advert to the sacrifices under the patriarchal dispensation, as to the origin of which a difference of opinion exists. This subject will call for some remarks in the sequel. But among the Jews, sacrifices were

unquestionably of divine original ; and as the terms taken from them are found applied so frequently to Christ and to his sufferings in the New Testament, they serve further to explain that peculiarity under which, as we have seen, the Apostles regarded the death of Christ, and afford additional proof that it was considered by them as a sacrifice of expiation, as the grand universal sin-offering for the whole world.

He is announced by John, his forerunner, as “ the Lamb of God ;” and that not with reference to meekness or any other moral virtue ; but with an accompanying phrase, which would communicate to a Jew the full sacrificial sense of the term employed,—“ the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He is called “ our Passover, sacrificed for us.” He is said to have given “ himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.” As a Priest, it was necessary “ he should have somewhat to offer ;” and he offered himself, “ his own blood,” to which is ascribed the washing away of sin, and our eternal redemption. He is declared to have “ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” to have “ by himself purged our sins,” to have “ sanctified the people by his own blood,” to have offered to God “ one sacrifice for sins.” Add to these, and innumerable other similar expressions and allusions, the argument of the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which, by proving at length, that the sacrifice of Christ was superior in efficacy to the sacrifices of the law, he most unequivocally assumes, that the death of Christ was a sacrifice and sin-offering ; for without that it would no more have been capable of comparison with the sacrifices of the law, than the death of John the Baptist, St. Stephen, or St. James, all martyrs and sufferers for the truth, who had recently sealed their testimony with their blood. This very comparison, we may boldly affirm, is utterly unaccountable and absurd on any hypothesis which denies the sacrifice of Christ ; for what relation could his death have to the Levitical immolations and offerings, if it had no sacrificial character ? Nothing could, in fact, be more misleading, and even absurd, than to apply those terms which, both among Jews and Gentiles, were in use to express the various processes and means

of atonement and piacular propitiation, if the Apostles and Christ himself did not intend to represent his death strictly as an expiation for sin :—Misleading, because such would be the natural and necessary inference from the terms themselves, which had acquired this as their established meaning : And absurd, because if, as Socinians say, they used them metaphorically, there was not even an ideal resemblance between the figure, and that which it was intended to illustrate. So totally irrelevant, indeed, will those terms appear to any notion entertained of the death of Christ which excludes its expiatory character, that to assume that our Lord and his Apostles used them as metaphors, is profanely to assume them to be such writers as would not in any other case be tolerated ; writers wholly unacquainted with the commonest rules of elocution, and therefore wholly unfit to be teachers of others, and that not only in religion but in things of inferior importance.

The use of such terms, we have said, would not only be wholly absurd, but criminally misleading to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews who were first converted to Christianity. To them the notion of propitiatory offerings, offerings to avert the displeasure of the gods, and which expiated the crimes of offenders, was most familiar, and terms corresponding to it were in constant use. The bold denial of this by Dr. Priestley might well bring upon him the reproof of Archbishop Magee, who, after establishing this point from the Greek and Latin writers, observes, “So clearly does their language announce the notion of a propitiatory atonement, that if we would avoid an imputation on Dr. Priestley’s fairness, we are driven, of necessity, to question the extent of his acquaintance with those writers.” The reader may consult the instances given by this writer, in No. 5 of his *Illustrations*, appended to his *Discourses on the Atonement* ; and also the tenth chapter of *Grotius De Satisfactione*, whose learning has most amply illustrated and firmly settled this view of the heathen sacrifices. The use to be made of this in the argument is, that as the Apostles found the very terms they used with reference to the nature and efficacy of the death of Christ, fixed in an expiatory signification among the Greeks, they could not, in honesty,



use them in a distant figurative sense, much less in a contrary one, without giving their readers due notice of their having invested them with a new import. From *αγος*, “a pollution,” “an impurity,” which was to be expiated by sacrifice, are derived *αγνίζω* and *αγιαζω*, which denote the act of expiation; *καθαίρω*, too, “to purify,” “cleanse,” is applied to the effect of expiation; and *ιλαζω* denotes the method of propitiating the gods by sacrifice. These, and other words of similar import, are used by the authors of the Septuagint, and by the Evangelists and Apostles; but they give no premonition of using them in any strange and altered sense; and when they apply them to the death of Christ, they must, therefore, be understood to use them in their received meaning.

In like manner the Jews had their expiatory sacrifices, and the terms and phrases used in them are, in like manner, employed by the Apostles to characterize the death of their Lord; and they would have been as guilty of misleading their Jewish as their Gentile readers, had they employed them in a new sense, and without warning, which, unquestionably, they never gave.

The force of this has been felt; and as, in order to avoid it, the expiatory nature of the Jewish sacrifices, and their typical signature, have both been questioned, it will be necessary to establish each.

As to the expiatory nature of the sacrifices of the law, it is not required by the argument to show that all the Levitical offerings were of this character. There were also offerings for persons and for things prescribed for purification, which were incidental; but even they grew out of the leading notion of expiatory sacrifice, and that legal purification which resulted from the forgiveness of sins. It is enough to prove, that the grand and eminent sacrifices of the Jews were strictly expiatory, and that by them the offerers were released from punishment and death, for which ends they were appointed by the Lawgiver.

When we speak, too, of vicarious sacrifice, we do not mean either, on the one hand, such a substitution as that the victim should bear the same quantum of pain and suffering as the

offender himself ; or, on the other, that it was put in the place of the offender as a mere symbolical act, by which he confessed his desert of punishment ; but a substitution made by divine appointment, by which the victim was exposed to sufferings and death instead of the offender, in virtue of which the offender himself was released. With this view, one can scarcely conceive why so able a writer as Archbishop Magee should prefer to use the term “ vicarious import,” rather than the simple and established term “ vicarious ;” since the Antinomian notion of substitution may be otherwise sufficiently guarded against, and the phrase “ vicarious import” is certainly capable of being resolved into that figurative notion of mere symbolical action which, however plausible, does in fact deprive the ancient sacrifices of their typical, and the oblation of Christ of its real, efficacy. Vicarious acting, is acting for another ; vicarious suffering, is suffering for another ; but the nature and circumstances of that suffering, in the case of Christ, are to be determined by the doctrine of Scripture at large, and not wholly by the term itself, which is, however, useful for this purpose, (and therefore to be preserved,) that it indicates the sense in which those who use it understand the declaration of Scripture, “ Christ died for us,” so as that he died not merely for our benefit, but in our stead ; in other words, that, but for his having died, those who believe in him would personally have suffered that death which is the penalty of every violation of the law of God.

That sacrifices under the law were expiatory and vicarious, admits of abundant proof.

The chief objections made to this doctrine are, First, that, under the law, in all capital cases, the offender, upon legal proof or conviction, was doomed to die, and that no sacrifice could exempt him from the penalty. Secondly, that in all lower cases to which the law had not attached capital punishment, but pecuniary mulcts, or personal labour or servitude, upon their non-payment this penalty was to be strictly executed, and none could plead any privilege or exemption on account of sacrifice ; and that when sacrifices were ordained with a pecuniary mulct, they are to be regarded in the light of fine, one part

of which was paid to the State, the other to the Church. This was the mode of argument adopted by the author of the *Moral Philosopher*; and nothing of weight has been added to these objections since his day.

Now, much of this may be granted, without any prejudice to the argument; and, indeed, is no more than the most orthodox writers on this subject have often remarked. The law, under which the Jews were placed, was at once, as to them, both a moral and a political law; and the Lawgiver excepted certain offences from the benefit of pardon, because it implied exemption from temporal death, which was the State penalty. He therefore would accept no atonement for such transgressions. Blasphemy, idolatry, murder, and adultery were the "presumptuous sins" which were thus exempted; and the reason will be seen in the political relation of the people to God; for in refusing to exempt them from punishment in this world, respect was had to the order and benefit of society. Running parallel, however, with this political application of the law to the Jews as subjects of the theocracy, we see the authority of the moral law kept over them as men and creatures; and if these "presumptuous sins," of blasphemy and idolatry, of murder and adultery, and a few others, were the only capital crimes considered politically, they were not the only capital crimes considered morally; that is, there were other crimes which would have subjected the offender to death, but for this provision of expiatory oblations. The true question then is, whether such sacrifices were appointed by God, and accepted instead of the personal punishment or life of the offender, which otherwise would have been forfeited, as in the other cases; and, if so, if the life of animal sacrifices was accepted instead of the life of man, then the notion that "they were mere mulcts and pecuniary penalties" falls to the ground, and the vicarious nature of most of the Levitical oblations is established.

That other offences, besides those above mentioned, were capital, that is, exposed the offender to death, is clear from this, that all offences against the law had this capital character. As death was the sanction of the commandment given to



Adam, so every one who transgressed any part of the law of Moses became guilty of death ; every man was accursed, that is, devoted to die, who “ continued not in all things written in the book of the law ;” the man only “ that doeth these things shall live by them,” was the rule ; and it was, therefore, to redeem the offenders from this penalty that sacrifices were appointed. So with reference to the great day of expiation, we read, “ For on that day shall the Priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins ; and this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.” (Lev. xvi. 30—34.)

To prove that this was the intention and effect of the annual sacrifices of the Jews, we need do little more than refer to Leviticus xvii. 10, 11 : “ I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood ; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls : For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Here the blood which is said to make an atonement for the soul, is the blood of the victims ; and to make an atonement for the soul is the same as to be a ransom for the soul, as will appear by referring to Exodus xxx. 12—16 ; and to be a ransom for the soul is to avert death. “ They shall give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, that there be no plague among them,” by which their lives might be suddenly taken away. The “ soul” is also here used obviously for the “ life ;” the blood, or the life, of the victims in all sacrifices, was substituted for the life of man, to preserve him from death, and the victims were therefore vicarious.\*

The Hebrew word כִּפָּר, rendered “ atonement,” signifying primarily “ to cover,” “ to overspread,” has been the subject of some evasive criticisms. It comes, however, in the secondary sense to signify “ atonement” or “ propitiation,” because the effect of that is to cover, or, in Scripture meaning, to remit offences. The Septuagint, also, renders it by ἐξιλασκομαι,

\* Vide Outram *De Sacrif.*, lib. 1, c. xxii.



“to appease,” “to make propitious.” It is used, indeed, where the means of atonement are not of the sacrificial kind, but these “instances equally serve to evince the Scripture sense of the term, in cases of transgression, to be that of reconciling the offended Deity, by averting his displeasure; so that when the atonement for sin is said to be made by sacrifice, no doubt can remain that the sacrifice was strictly a sacrifice of propitiation. Agreeably to this conclusion we find it expressly declared, in the several cases of peculiar oblations for transgression of the divine commands, that the sin for which atonement was made by those oblations should be forgiven.”\*

As the notion that the sacrifices of the law were not vicarious, but mere mulcts and fines, is overturned by the general appointment of the blood to be an atonement for the souls, the forfeited lives, of men, so also is it contradicted by particular instances. Let us refer to Leviticus v. 15, 16: “If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord, he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and shall give it to the Priest.” Here, indeed, is the proper fine for the trespass; but it is added, “He shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord a ram without blemish; and the Priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.” Thus, then, so far from the sacrifice being the fine, the fine is distinguished from it, and with the ram only was the atonement made to the Lord for his trespass. Nor can the ceremonies, with which the trespass and sin offerings were accompanied, agree with any notion but that of their vicarious character. The worshipper, conscious of his trespass, brought an animal, his own property, to the door of the tabernacle. This was not an eucharistical act, not a memorial of mercies received, but of sins committed. He laid his hands upon the head of the animal, the symbolical act of transferring punishment; then slew it with his own hand, and delivered it to the Priest, who

\* Magee’s Discourses, vol. i., p. 332.

burnt the fat and part of the animal upon the altar, and having sprinkled part of the blood upon the altar, and, in some cases, upon the offerer himself, poured the rest at the bottom of the altar. And thus, we are told, "the Priest shall make an atonement for him, as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him." So clearly is it made manifest by these actions, and by the description of their nature and end, that the animal bore the punishment of the offender, and that by this appointment he was reconciled to God, and obtained the forgiveness of his offences.

An equally strong proof, that the life of the animal sacrifice was accepted in place of the life of man, is afforded by the fact, that atonement was required by the law to be made, by sin-offerings and burnt-offerings, for even bodily distempers and disorders. It is not necessary to the argument to explain the distinctions between these various oblations; \* nor yet to inquire into the reason for requiring propitiation to be made for corporal infirmities which, in many cases, could not be avoided. They were, however, thus connected with sin as the cause of all these disorders; and God, who had placed his residence among the Israelites, insisted upon a perfect ceremonial purity, to impress upon them a sense of his moral purity, and the necessity of purification of mind. Whether these were the reasons, or some others not at all discoverable by us, all such unclean persons were liable to death, and were exempted from it only by animal sacrifices. This appears from the conclusion to all the Levitical directions concerning the ceremonial to be observed in all such cases: "Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in (or by) their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle which is among them." (Lev. xv. 31.) So that by virtue of the sin-offerings, the children of Israel were saved from a death which otherwise they would have suffered for their uncleanness, and that by substituting the life of the animal for the life of the offerer. Nor can it be urged, that death is, in these instances, threatened only as the punishment of not

\* On this subject see Outram *De Sacrificiis*.

observing these laws of purification ; for the reason given in the passage just quoted shows, that the threatening of death was not hypothetical upon their not bringing the prescribed purification, but is grounded upon the fact of "defiling the tabernacle of the Lord which was among them," which is supposed to be done by all uncleanness, as such, in the first instance.

As a further proof of the vicarious character of the principal sacrifices of the Mosaic economy, we may instance those statedly offered for the whole congregation. Every day were offered two lambs, one in the morning, and the other in the evening, "for a continual burnt-offering." To these daily victims were to be added, weekly, two other lambs for the burnt-offering of every Sabbath. None of these could be considered in the light of fines for offences, since they were offered for no particular persons ; and must be considered, therefore, unless resolved into an unmeaning ceremony, piacular and vicarious. To pass over, however, the monthly sacrifices, and those offered at the great feasts, it is sufficient to fix upon those, so often alluded to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, offered on the solemn anniversary of expiation. On that day, to other prescribed sacrifices were to be added another ram for a burnt-offering, and another goat, the most eminent of the sacrifices, for a sin-offering, whose blood was to be carried by the High Priest into the inner sanctuary, which was not done by the blood of any other victim, except the bullock, which was offered the same day as a sin-offering for the family of Aaron. "The circumstances of this ceremony, whereby atonement was to be made 'for all the sins' of the whole Jewish people, are so strikingly significant that they deserve a particular detail. On the day appointed for this general expiation, the Priest is commanded to offer a bullock and a goat, as sin-offerings, the one for himself, and the other for the people, and having sprinkled the blood of these, in due form, before the mercy-seat, to lead forth a second goat, denominated 'the scape-goat ;' and after laying both his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the people, to put them upon the head of the goat, and to



send the animal, thus bearing the sins of the people, away into the wilderness ; in this manner expressing, by an action which cannot be misunderstood, that the atonement, which, it is affirmed, was to be effected by the sacrifice of the sin-offering, consisted in removing from the people their iniquities by this translation of them to the animal. For it is to be remarked, that the ceremony of the scape-goat is not a distinct one ; it is a continuation of the process, and is evidently the concluding part, and symbolical consummation, of the sin-offering. So that the transfer of the iniquities of the people upon the head of the scape-goat, and the bearing them away into the wilderness, manifestly imply, that the atonement effected by the sacrifice of the sin-offering consisted in the transfer, and consequent removal, of those iniquities.”\*

How, then, is this impressive and singular ceremonial to be explained ? Shall we resort to the notion of mulcts and fines ; If so, then this and other stated sacrifices must be considered in the light of penal enactments. But this cannot agree with the appointment of such sacrifices annually in succeeding generations : “ This shall be a statute for ever unto you.” The law appoints a certain day in the year for expiating the sins both of the High Priest himself and of the whole congregation, and that for all High Priests and all generations of the congregation. Now, could a law be enacted, inflicting a certain penalty, at a certain time, upon a whole people, as well as upon their High Priest, thus presuming upon their actual transgression of it ? The sacrifice was also for sins in general ; and yet the penalty, if it were one, is not greater than individual persons were often obliged to undergo for single trespasses. Nothing, certainly, can be more absurd than this hypothesis.†

Shall we account for it by saying, that “ sacrifices were offered for the benefit of the worshipper, but exclude the notion of expiation ?” But here we are obliged to confine the benefit to reconciliation and the taking away of sins, and that by the appointed means of the shedding of blood, and the presentation

\* Magee's Discourses.

† Vide Chapman's Eusebius.



of blood in the holy place, accompanied by the expressive ceremony of imposition of hands upon the head of the victim ; the import of which act is fixed, beyond all controversy, by the Priest's confessing over that victim the sins of all the people, and at the same time imprecating upon its head the vengeance due to them. (Lev. xvi. 21.)

Shall we content ourselves with merely saying that this was a symbol ? But the question remains, Of what was it the symbol ? To determine this, let the several parts of the symbolic action be enumerated. Here is confession of sin ; confession before God, at the door of his tabernacle ; the substitution of a victim ; the figurative transfer of sins to that victim ; the shedding of blood, which God appointed to make atonement for the soul ; the carrying the blood into the holiest place, the very permission of which clearly marked the divine acceptance ; the bearing away of iniquity ; and the actual reconciliation of the people to God. If, then, this is symbolical, it has nothing correspondent with it ; it never had or can have any thing correspondent to it but the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, and the communication of the benefits of his passion in the forgiveness of sins to those that believe in him, and in their reconciliation with God.

Shall we, finally, say that " those sacrifices had respect, not to God to obtain pardon by expiation, but to the offerer, teaching him moral lessons, and calling forth moral dispositions ? " We answer, that this hypothesis leaves many of the essential circumstances of the ceremonial wholly unaccounted for. The tabernacle and temple were erected for the residence of God, by his own command. There it was his will to be approached ; and to these sacred places the victims were required to be brought. Any where else they might as well have been offered, if they had had respect only to the offerer ; but they were required to be brought to God, to be offered according to a prescribed ritual, and by an order of men appointed for that purpose. " But there is no other reason why they should be offered in the sanctuary, than this, that they were offered to the Inhabitant of the sanctuary ; nor could they be offered to him without having respect to him,

or without his being the object of their efficacy, as in the case of solemn prayers addressed to him. There were some victims whose blood, on the day of atonement, was to be carried into the inner sanctuary; but for what purpose can we suppose the blood to have been carried into the most sacred part of the divine residence, and that on the day of atonement, except to obtain the favour of Him in whose presence it was sprinkled?"\* To this we may add, that the reason given for these sacred services is not in any case a mere moral effect to be produced upon the minds of the worshippers; they were to make atonement, that is, to avert God's displeasure, that the people might not "die."

We may find also another most explicit illustration in the sacrifice of the passover. The sacrificial character of this offering is strongly marked; for it was *Corban*, an offering brought to the tabernacle; it was slain in the sanctuary; and the blood was sprinkled upon the altar by the Priests. It derives its name from the "passing over" and sparing the houses of the Israelites, on the door-posts of which the blood of the immolated lamb was sprinkled, when the first-born in the houses of the Egyptians were slain; and thus we have another instance of life being spared by the instituted means of animal sacrifice. Nor need we confine ourselves to particular instances: "Almost all things," says an Apostle, who surely knew his subject, "are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."

By their very law, and by constant usage, then, were the Jews familiarized to the notion of expiatory sacrifice, as well as by the history contained in their sacred books, especially in Genesis, which speaks of the vicarious sacrifices offered by the Patriarchs; and the Book of Job, in which that Patriarch is recorded to have offered sacrifices for the supposed sins of his sons, and Eliphaz is commanded, by a divine oracle, to offer a burnt-offering for himself and his friends, "lest God should deal with them after their folly."

On the sentiments of the uninspired Jewish writers on this

\* Outram *De Sacrificiis*.

point, the substitution of the life of the animal for that of the offerer, and, consequently, the expiatory nature of their sacrifices, Outram has given many quotations from their writings, which the reader may consult in his work *On Sacrifices*. Two or three only may be adduced by way of specimen: R. Levi Ben Gerson says, "The imposition of the hands of the offerers was designed to indicate, that their sins were removed from themselves, and transferred to the animal." Isaac Ben Arama: "He transfers his sins from himself, and lays them upon the head of the victim." R. Moses Ben Nachman says, with respect to a sinner offering a victim, "It was just that his blood should be shed, and that his body should be burned; but the Creator, of his mercy, accepted the victim from him, as his substitute and ransom; that the blood of the animal might be shed instead of his blood; that is, that the blood of the animal might be given for his life."

Full of these ideas of vicarious expiation, then, the Apostles wrote and spoke, and the Jews of their time, and in subsequent ages, heard and read, the books of the New Testament. The Socinian pretence is, that the inspired penmen used the sacrificial terms which occur in their writings, figuratively; but we not only reply, as before, that they could not do this honestly, unless they had given notice of this new application of the established terms of the Jewish theology; but that, if this be assumed, their writings leave us wholly at a loss to discover what that really was which they intended to teach by these sacrificial terms and allusions. They are, themselves, utterly silent as to this; and the varying theories of those who reject the doctrine of atonement, in fact, confess that their writings afford no solution of the difficulty. If, therefore, it is blasphemous to suppose, on the one hand, that inspired men should write on purpose to mislead; so, on the other, is it utterly inconceivable that, had they only been ordinary writers, they should construct a figurative language out of terms which had a definite and established sense, without giving any intimation that they employed them otherwise than in their received meaning, or telling us why they adopted them at all, and more especially when they knew that they must be inter-



preted, both by Jews and Greeks, in a sense which, if the Socinians are right, was in direct opposition to that which they intended to convey.

This will, however, appear with additional evidence, when the typical, as well as the expiatory, character of the legal sacrifices are considered. In strict argument, the latter does not depend upon the former; for if the oblations of the Mosaic institute had not been intentionally adumbrative of the one oblation of Christ, the argument, from their vicarious and expiatory character, would still have been valid. If the legal sacrifices were offered in place of the offender, blood for blood, life for life, and if the death of Christ is represented to be, in as true a sense, a sacrifice and expiation, then is the doctrine of the New Testament writers, as to the expiatory character of the death of our Lord, explicitly established.

That the Levitical sacrifices were also types, is another argument, and accumulates the already preponderating evidence.

A type, in the theological sense, is defined by systematic writers to be a sign or example, prepared and designed by God, to prefigure some future thing. It is required that it should represent (though the degree of clearness may be very different in different instances) this future object, either by something which it has in common with it, or in being the symbol of some property which it possesses; that it should be prepared and designed by God thus to represent its antitype, which circumstance distinguishes it from a simile, and from a hieroglyphic; that it should give place to the antitype so soon as the latter appears; and that the efficacy of the antitype should exist in the type in appearance only, or in a lower degree.\* These may be considered as the general properties of a type.

Of this kind are the views given us, in the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, of the Levitical dispensation, and of many events and examples of the Mosaic history. Thus St. Paul calls the meats and drinks, the holy days, new moons, and sabbaths, of the Jews, including in them the services performed in the celebration of these festivals, “a shadow of things

\* Vide Outram *De Sacrificiis*.



to come ;” “the body” of which shadow, whose form the shadow generally and faintly exhibited, “is Christ.” Again : When speaking of the things which happened to the Israelites in the wilderness, he calls them “ensamples,” *τυποι*, “types,” “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” In Hebrews x. 1, the same Apostle, when he discourses expressly on the “sacrifices” of the tabernacle, calls them “the shadow of good things to come,” and places them in contrast with “the very image of the things,” that is, the “good things” just before mentioned ; and, in the preceding chapter, he tells us that the services performed in the tabernacle prefigured what was afterwards to be transacted in the heavenly sanctuary. These instances are sufficient for the argument ; and, in examining them, we may observe, that if the things here alluded to are not allowed to be types, then they are used as mere illustrative rhetorical illustrations ; and in their original institution had no more reference to the facts and doctrines of the Christian system than the sacrificial services of pagan temples, which might, in some particulars, upon this hypothesis, just as well have served the Apostle’s purpose. But if, upon examination, this notion of their being used merely as rhetorical illustrations be contradicted by the passages themselves, then the true typical character of these events and ceremonies may be considered as fairly established.

With respect to the declaration of St. Paul, that the punishments inflicted upon the disobedient and unfaithful Israelites in the wilderness were “types written for our admonition,” it is only to be explained by considering the history of that people as designedly, and by appointment, typical. These things happened for types ; and that, by “types,” the Apostle means much more than a general admonitory correspondence between disobedience and punishment, (which many other circumstances might just as well have afforded,) he adds, that “they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come,” that is, for the admonition of Christians who had entered into the obligations of the new dispensation. For this purpose they were recorded ; by this act of God they were made types in the highest sense :

and could not become types in the sense of mere figurative illustration, which would have been contingent upon this rhetorical use being made of them by some subsequent writer. This is further confirmed also by the preceding verses, in which the Apostle calls the manna "spiritual meat," which can only be understood of it as being a type of the bread which came down from heaven, even Christ, who, in allusion to the same fact, so designates himself. The "rock," too, is called the "spiritual rock;" "and that rock," adds the Apostle, "was Christ;" but in what conceivable meaning, except as it was an appointed type of him?

This is St. Paul's general description of the typical character of "the church in the wilderness." In the other passages quoted, he adduces, in particular, the Levitical services. He calls the ceremonial of the law *σκια*, "a shadow;" in the Epistle to the Colossians, he opposes this shadow to "the body;" in that to the Hebrews, to "the very image;" by which he obviously means the reality of "the good things" adumbrated, or their essential form or substance. Now whether we take the word *σκια* for the shadow of the body of man, or for a faint delineation or sketch, to be succeeded by a finished picture, it is clear, that, whatever the law was, it was by divine appointment; and as there is a relation between the shadow and the body which produces it, and the sketch or outline and the finished picture, so if, by divine appointment, the law was this shadow of good things to come, which is what the Apostle asserts, then there was an intended relation of one to the other, quite independent of the figurative and rhetorical use which might be made of a mere accidental comparison. If the Apostle speaks figuratively only, then the law is to be supposed to have no appointed relation to the Gospel, as a shadow or sketch of good things to come, and this relation is one of imagination only: If the relation was a designed and an appointed one, then the resolution of the Apostle's words into figurative allusion cannot be maintained. But, further, the Apostle grounds an argument upon these types; an argument, too, of the most serious kind; an argument for renouncing the law and embracing the Gospel, upon the penalty of eternal

danger to the soul: No absurdity can, therefore, be greater than to suppose him to argue so weighty and important a question upon a relation of one thing to another existing only in the imagination, and not appointed by God; and if the relation was so appointed, it is of that instituted and adumbrative kind which constitutes a type in its special and theological sense.

Of this appointment and designation of the tabernacle service to be a shadow of good things to come, the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews affords several direct and unequivocal declarations. So verses 7 and 8: "But into the second went the High Priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people; the Holy Ghost signifying this," (showing, declaring by this type,) "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." Here we have the declaration of a doctrine by type; which is surely very different from the figurative use of a fact, employed to embellish and enforce an argument by a subsequent writer; and this is also referred to the design and intention of the Holy Ghost himself, at the time when the Levitical ritual was prescribed. This typical declaration too was to continue until the new dispensation should be introduced. In verse 9, the tabernacle itself is called a figure, or parable: "Which was *παραβολη*, a figure, for the time then present." It was a parable by which the evangelical and spiritual doctrines were taught; it was an appointed parable, because limited to a certain time, "for the time then present," that is, until the bringing in of the things signified, to which it had this designed relation. Again, verse 23, "the things under the law" are called "patterns" (representations) "of things in the heavens;" and in verse 24, the holy places made with hands are denominated "the figures" (antitypes) "of the true." Were they then representations and antitypes only in St. Paul's imagination, or in reality and by appointment? Read his argument: "It was necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." On the hypothesis that sacrificial



terms and allusions are employed figuratively only by the Apostle, what kind of argument, we may ask, is this? On what does the common necessity of the purification both of the earthly and the heavenly tabernacle, by sacrifices, though different in their degree of value and efficacy, rest? Could the Apostle say, that this was necessary, to afford him a figurative embellishment in writing his Epistle? The necessity is clearly grounded upon the relation instituted by the Author of the Levitical economy himself; the heavenly places were not to be entered by sinners, but through the blood of "better sacrifices;" and to teach this doctrine early to mankind, it was "necessary" to purify the earthly tabernacle, and thus give the people access to it only by the blood of the inferior sacrifices, that both these and the tabernacle might be the types of evangelical and heavenly things, and that all might thus learn the only means of obtaining access to the tabernacle in heaven. There was, therefore, in setting up these "patterns," an intentioned adumbration of these future things; and hence the word used is *υποδειγμα*, the import of which is shown in chap. viii. 5, where it is associated with the term, "the shadow of heavenly things:" "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things;" or, "These" (Priests) "perform the service with a representation and shadow of the heavenly things."

The sacrificial ceremonies, then, of the Levitical institute are clearly established to be typical, and have all the characters which constitute a type in the received theological sense. They are represented by St. Paul, in the passages which have been under consideration, as adumbrative; as designed and appointed to be so by God; as having respect to things future, to Christ and to his sacerdotal ministry; as being inferior in efficacy to the antitypes which correspond to them, the "better sacrifices" of which he speaks; and they were all displaced by the antitype, the Levitical ceremony being repealed by the death and ascension of our Lord.

Since, then, both the expiatory and the typical characters of the Jewish sacrifices were so clearly held by the writers of the New Testament, there can be no rational doubt as to



the sense in which they apply sacrificial terms and allusions to describe the nature and effect of the death of Christ. As the offering of the animal sacrifice took away sin, that is, obtained remission for offences against the law, we can be at no loss to know what the Baptist means, when, pointing to Christ, he exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." As there was a transfer of suffering and death, from the offender to the legally clean and sound victim, so Christ died, "the just for the unjust;" as the animal sacrifice was expiatory, so Christ is our *ιασμος*, "propitiation," or "expiation;" as by the Levitical oblations men were reconciled to God, so "we, when enemies, were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" as, under the law, "without shedding of blood there was no remission," so, as to Christ, we are "justified by his blood," and have "redemption through his blood, the remission of sins;" as by the blood of the appointed sacrifices the holy places, made with hands, were made accessible to the Jewish worshippers, that blood, being carried into them, and sprinkled by the High Priest, so "Christ entered once, with his own blood, into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," and has thus opened for us a "new and living way" into the celestial sanctuary; as the blood of the Mosaic oblations was the blood of the Old Testament, so Christ himself says, "This is my blood of the New Testament, shed for the remission of sins;" as it was a part of the sacrificial solemnity, in some instances, to feast upon the victim, so, with direct reference to this, our Lord also declares that he would give his own "flesh for the life of the world;" and that "whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" that is, it is in truth and reality what the flesh and blood of the Jewish victims were in type.

The instances of this use of sacrificial terms are, indeed, almost innumerable; and enough, I trust, has been said to show that they could not be employed in a merely figurative sense: Nevertheless there are two or three passages where they occur as the basis of an argument which wholly depends upon taking

them in the received sense. With a brief consideration of these we may conclude this part of the subject.

When St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," or, "Him who knew no sin, he hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" he concludes a discourse upon our reconciliation to God, and lays this down as the general principle upon which that reconciliation, of which he has been speaking, is to be explained and enforced. Here, then, the question is, In what sense was Christ made sin for us? Not, certainly, as to the guilt of it, (for it is expressly said, that "he knew no sin,") but as to the expiation of it by his personal sufferings, by which he delivers the guilty from punishment. For the phrase is manifestly taken from the sin-offerings of the Old Testament, which are there sometimes called "sins," as being offerings for sin, and because the animals sacrificed represented the sinners themselves. Thus Leviticus iv. 21, the heifer to be offered is called, in our translation, more agreeably to our idiom, "a sin-offering for the congregation;" but in the LXX. it is denominated, "the sin of the congregation." So, also, in verse 29, as to the red heifer which was to be offered for the sin of private persons, the person offending was "to lay his hand upon the head of the sin-offering," as we rightly interpret it; but in the LXX., "upon the head of his sin," agreeably to the Hebrew word, which signifies indifferently either sin or the offering for it. Thus, again, in Leviticus vi. 25, "This is the law of the sin-offering;" in the Greek, "This is the law of sin;" which also has, "They shall slay the sins before the Lord," for the sin-offerings. The Greek of the Apostle Paul is thus easily explained by that of the LXX., and affords a natural exposition of the passage, "Him who knew no sin God hath made sin for us," as the sin-offerings of the law were "made sins" for offenders,—the death of innocent creatures exempting from death those who were really criminal.\* This allusion to the Levitical sin-offerings is also established by the

• Vide Chapinan's Eusebius, chap. iv.

connexion of Christ's sin-offering with our reconciliation. Such was the effect of the sin-offerings among the Jews, and such, St. Paul tells us, is the effect of Christ being made a sin-offering for us ; a sufficient proof that he does not use the term figuratively, nor speak of the indirect, but of the direct, effect of the death of Christ in reconciling us to God.

Again, in Ephesians v. 2, " Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Here also he adopts the very terms used in the Jewish sacrifices. How, then, could a Jew, or even a Gentile, understand him ? Would an inspired man use sacrificial language without a sacrificial sense, and merely amuse his readers with the sound of words without meaning, or employ them, without notice being given, in a meaning which the readers were not accustomed to affix to them ? The argument forbids this, as well as the reason and honesty of the case. His object was to impress the Ephesians with the deepest sense of the love of Christ ; and he says, " Christ loved us ; and gave up himself for us ;" and then explains the mode in which he thus gave himself up for us, that is, in our room and stead, " an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour ;" by which his readers could only understand, that Christ gave himself up a sacrifice for them, as other sacrifices had been given up for them, " in the way of expiation, to obtain for them the mercy and favour of God." The cavil of Crellius and his followers on this passage is easily answered. He says that the phrase, " a sweet smelling savour," is scarcely ever used of sin-offerings or expiatory sacrifices ; but of burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings by which expiation was not made. But here are two mistakes. The first lies in assuming, that burnt-offerings were not expiatory, whereas they are said " to make atonement," and were so considered by the Jews, though sometimes also they were eucharistic. The second mistake is, that the phrase, " a sweet smelling savour," is by some peculiar fitness applied to one class of offerings alone. It is a gross conception, that it relates principally to the odour of sacrifices burned with fire ; whereas it signifies the acceptableness of sacrifices to God ; and is so explained in Philippians iv. 18,



where the Apostle calls the bounty of the Philippians, "an odour of sweet smell," and adds, exegetically, "a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God." The phrase is, probably, taken from the incensing which accompanied the sacrificial services.

To these instances must be added the whole argument of St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. To what purpose does he prove that Christ had a superior priesthood to Aaron, if Christ were only metaphorically a Priest? What end is answered by proving, that his offering of himself had greater efficacy than the oblations of the tabernacle, in taking away sin, if sin was not taken away in the same sense, that is, by expiation? Why does he lay so mighty a stress upon the death of our Lord, as being "a better sacrifice," if, according to the received sense, it was no sacrifice at all? His argument, it is manifest, would go for nothing, and be no better than an unworthy trifling with his readers, and especially with the Hebrews to whom he writes the Epistle, beneath not only an inspired but an ordinary writer. Fully to unfold the argument, we might travel through the greater part of the Epistle; but one or two passages may suffice. In chapter vii. 27, speaking of Christ as our High Priest, he says, "Who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this" (latter) "he did once, when he offered up himself." The circumstance of his offering sacrifice, not daily, but "once for all," marks the superior value and efficacy of his sacrifice; his offering up this sacrifice of himself for the sins of the people, as the Jewish High Priest offered his animal sacrifices for the sins of the people, marks the similarity of the act; in both cases atonement was made, but with different degrees of efficacy; but unless atonement for sin was in reality made by his thus offering up himself, the virtue and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice would be inferior to that of the Aaronical priesthood, contrary to the declared design and argument of the Epistle. Let us also refer to chapter ix. 13, 14: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh," so as to fit the



offender for joining in the service of the tabernacle; "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" The comparison here lies in this, that the Levitical sacrifices expiated legal punishments, yet did not in themselves acquit the people absolutely in respect to God, as the Governor and Judge of mankind; but that the blood of Christ extends its virtue to the conscience, and eases it of all guilty terror of the wrath to come, on account of "dead works," or works which deserve death under the universal moral law. The ground of this comparison, however, lies in the real efficacy of each of these expiations. Each "purifies," each delivers from guilt, but the latter only as "pertaining to the conscience," whilst the mode in each case is by expiation. But to interpret the purging of the conscience, with the Socinians, of mere dissuasion from dead works, or as descriptive of the power of Christ to acquit men upon their repentance declaratively, destroys all just similitude between the blood of Christ and that of the animal sacrifices, and the argument amounts to nothing.

We conclude with a passage, to which we have before adverted, which institutes a comparison between the Levitical purification of the holy places made with hands, and the purification of the heavenly places by the blood of Christ: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." To enter into the meaning of this passage, we are to consider that God dwelt personally among the Israelites; that the sanctuary and tabernacle are represented as polluted by their sins, and even by corporal impurities, the penalty of which was death, unless atoned for, or expiated according to law; and that all unclean persons were debarred access to

the tabernacle and the service of God, until expiation was made, and purification thereby effected. It was under these views that the sin-offerings were made on the day of expiation, to which the Apostle alludes in the above passage. Then the High Priest entered into the holy of holies, with the blood of sacrifices, to make atonement both for himself and the whole people. He first offered for himself and for his house a bullock, and sprinkled the blood of it upon and before the mercy-seat, within the veil. Afterwards he killed a goat for a sin-offering for the people, and sprinkled the blood in like manner. This was called atoning for, or hallowing and reconciling, the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, "because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins." The effect of all this was the remission of sins, which is represented by the scape-goat, which carried away the sins that had been confessed over it with imposition of hands; and the purification of the Priests and people, so that their holy places were made accessible to them, and they were allowed, without fear of the death which had been threatened, to "draw near" to God.

We have already shown that here "the holy places made with hands," and the "true holy places," of which they were the figures, were purified and opened, each in the same way, by the sprinkling of the blood of the victims,—the patterns or emblems of things in the heavens, by the blood of animals, the heavenly places themselves by "better sacrifices,"—and that the argument of the Apostle forbids us to suppose that he is speaking figuratively. Let us, then, merely mark the correspondence of the type and antitype in this case, as here exhibited. St. Paul compares the legal sacrifices, and that of Christ, in the similar purification of the respective *αγία* or "sanctuaries" to which each had relation. The Jewish sanctuary on earth was purified, that is, opened and made accessible, by the one; the celestial sanctuary, the true and everlasting seat of God's presence, by the other. Accordingly, in other passages, he pursues the parallel still farther, representing Christ as procuring for men by his death a happy admission

into heaven, as the sin-offerings of the law obtained for the Jews a safe entrance into the tabernacle on earth. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Thus, also he tells us, that "we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Christ Jesus;" and that as the bodies of those animals whose blood was carried into the holy of holies by the High Priest, to make an atonement for sin, were burned "without the camp," so also Jesus suffered without the gate, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood."

The notion that sacrificial terms are applied to the death of Christ by rhetorical figure is, then, sufficiently refuted by the foregoing considerations. But it has been argued, that as there is, in many respects, a want of literal conformity between the death of Christ and the sacrifices of the law, a considerable license of figurative interpretation must be allowed. Great confusion of ideas on this subject has resulted from not observing a very obvious distinction which exists between figurative and analogical language. It by no means follows, that, when language cannot be interpreted literally, it must be taken figuratively, or by way of rhetorical allusion. The distinction adverted to is well stated by a late writer.\*

"Figurative language," he observes, "does not arise from the real nature of the thing to which it is transferred, but only from the imagination of him who transfers it. So, a man of courage is figuratively called 'a lion,' not because the real nature of a lion belongs to him, but because one quality which characterizes this animal belongs to him in an eminent degree; and the imagination conceives of them as partakers of a common nature, and applies to them one common name. But there is a species of language, usually called 'analogical,' which,



though not strictly proper, is far from being merely figurative, the terms being transferred from one thing to another, not because the things are similar, but because they are in similar relations. The term thus transferred is as truly significant of the real nature of the thing, in the relation in which it stands, as it could be, were it the primitive and proper word. Thus the term 'foot' properly signifies the lower extremity of an animal, or that on which it stands; but, because the lower extremity or base of a mountain is to the mountain what the foot is to the animal, it is therefore called by the same name; and the term thus applied is significant of something real, something which, if not a foot in strict propriety of speech, is, nevertheless, truly so, considered with respect to the circumstance upon which the analogy is founded. But this mode of expression is more common with respect to our mental and intellectual faculties and operations, which we are wont to denominate by words borrowed from similar functions of the bodily organs and corresponding attributes of material things. Thus 'to see,' is properly to acquire impressions of sensible objects by the organs of sight; but to the mind is also attributed an eye, with which we are, analogically, said to see objects intellectual. In like manner, great and little, equal and unequal, smooth and rough, sweet and sour, are properly attributes of material substances; but they are analogically ascribed to such as are immaterial; for, without intending a figure, we speak of a great mind, and a little mind; and the natural temper of one man is said to be equal, smooth, and sweet, while that of another is called unequal, rough, and sour. And if we thus express such intellectual things as fall more immediately under our observation, we cannot wonder that things spiritual and divine, which are more removed from our direct inspection, should be exhibited to our apprehension in the same manner. The conceptions which we thus form may be imperfect and inadequate; but they are, nevertheless, just and true; consequently the language in which they are expressed, although borrowed, is not merely figurative, but is significant of something real in the things concerned."

To apply this to the case before us: The blood or life of Christ



is called our "ransom," and the "price of our redemption." Now, admitting that these expressions are not to be understood literally, does it follow that they contain mere figure and allusion? By no means. They contain truth and reality. Christ came to redeem us from the power of sin and Satan, by paying for our deliverance no less a price than his own blood. "In him we have redemption through his blood." "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many;" and we are taught, by this representation, that the blood of Christ, in the deliverance of sinful man, corresponds to a price or ransom in the deliverance of a captive, and consequently is a price or ransom, if not literally, at least really and truly.

When Christ is called "our passover," the same analogical use of terms is manifest, and in several other passages which will be familiar to the reader; but we hesitate to apply the same rule of interpretation throughout, and to say with the author just quoted, and Archbishop Magee, who refers to him on this point with approbation, that Christ is called a "sin-offering" and a "sacrifice" analogically. These terms, on the contrary, are used properly, and must be understood literally. For what was an expiatory sacrifice under the law, but the offering of the life of an innocent creature in the place of the guilty, and that, in order to obtain his exemption from death? The death of Christ is as literally an offering of himself, "the just for the unjust," to exempt the latter from death. The legal sin-offerings cleansed the body and qualified for the ceremonial worship prescribed by the law; and the blood of Christ as truly purifies the conscience, and consecrates to the spiritual service required by the Gospel. The circumstances differ; but the things themselves are not so much analogical as identical in their nature, though differing in circumstances; that is, so far as the legal sacrifices had any efficacy *per se*; but in another and a higher view, the sacrifice of Christ was the only true sacrifice, and the Levitical ones were but the appointed types of that. If, therefore, in this argument, we may refer to the Mosaic sacrifices, to fix the sense in which the New Testament uses the sacrificial terms in which it speaks of the death of Christ, against an objector; yet, in fact,

the sacrifices of the law are to be interpreted by the sacrifice of Christ, and not the latter by them. They are rather analogical with it, than it with them. There was a previous ordination of pardon through the appointed sacrifice of the Lamb of God, "slain from the foundation of the world," to which they all, in different degrees, referred, and of which they were but the visible and sensible monitors "for the time present."

As to the objection, that the Jewish sacrifices had no reference to the expiation of moral transgression, we observe:—

1. A distinction is to be made between sacrifice as a part of the theo-political law of the Jews, and sacrifice as a consuetudinary rite, practised by their fathers, and by them also previous to the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, and taken up into the Mosaic institute. This was continued partly on its original ground, and partly, and with additions, as a branch of the polity under which the Jews were placed. With this rite they were familiar before the law, and even before the exodus from Egypt. "Let us go," says Moses to Pharaoh, "we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword." Here sacrifice is spoken of, and that with reference to expiation, or the averting of the divine displeasure. There is in this, too, an acknowledgment of offences, as the reason of sacrificing; but these offences could not be against the forms and ceremonies of an institute which did not then exist, and must, therefore, have been moral offences. We may add to this, that in the books of Leviticus and Exodus, Moses speaks of sacrifices as a previous practice, and, in some cases, so far from prescribing the act, does no more than regulate the mode. "If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male." Had their sacrifices, therefore, reference only to cases of ceremonial offence, then it would follow that they had been deprived of the worship of their ancestors which respected the obtaining of the divine favour in the forgiveness of moral offences, and that they obtained, as a substitute, a kind of worship which respected only ceremonial cleansings and a ceremonial reconciliation. They had this,

manifestly, as the type of something higher ; and they had also the patriarchal rites with renewed sanctions and under new regulations ; and thus there was a real advance in the spirituality of their worship, whilst it became, at the same time, more ceremonial and exact.

2. The offerings which were formally prescribed under the law had reference to moral transgressions, as well as to external aberrations from the purity and exactness of the Levitical ritual.

Atonement is said to be made for sins committed against any of the commandments of the Lord. It appears, also, that sins of ignorance included all sins which were not ranked in the class of presumptuous sins, or those to which death was inevitably annexed by the civil law, and therefore must have included many cases of moral transgression. For some specific instances of this kind sin-offerings were enjoined, such as lying, theft, fraud, extortion, and perjury.\*

3. If all the sin-offerings of the Levitical institute had respected legal atonement and ceremonial purification, nothing could have been collected from that circumstance to invalidate the true sacrifice of Christ. It is of the nature of a type to be inferior in efficacy to the antitype ; and the Apostle Paul himself argues, from the invalidity of Levitical sacrifices to take away guilt from the conscience, the superior efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. It follows, then, that as truly as they were legal atonements, so truly was Christ's death a moral atonement ; as truly as they purified the flesh, so truly did his sacrifice purify the conscience.

\* Vide Outram *De Sac.* ; Hallet's Notes and Discourses ; Hammond and Rosenmüller in Heb. ix. ; Richie's Pec. Doctrines.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### *Redemption :—Primitive Sacrifices.*

To the rite of sacrifice, which was practised before the law in the patriarchal ages, and in the first family, it may be proper to give some consideration, both for the further elucidation of some of the topics above stated, and for the purpose of exhibiting the harmony of those dispensations of religion which were made to fallen man in different ages of the world. That the ante-Mosaic sacrifices were expiatory, is the first point which it is necessary to establish. It is not, indeed, at all essential to our argument to ascend higher than the sacrifices of the law, which we have already proved to be of that character, and by which the expiatory efficacy of the death of Christ is represented in the New Testament ; but the more ancient rites of the patriarchal church were expiatory also ; and thus we see the same principles of moral government which distinguish the Christian and Mosaic dispensations, carried still higher as to their antiquity, even to the family of the first man, and to the first transgressor : “ Without shedding of blood there was no remission.”

The proofs that sacrifices of atonement made a part of the religious system of the patriarchs who lived before the law, are, first, the distribution of beasts into clean and unclean, which we find prior to the flood of Noah. This is a singular distinction, and one which could not then have reference to food, since animal food was not allowed to man prior to the deluge ; and as we know of no other ground for the distinction except that of sacrifice, it must, therefore, have had reference to the selection of victims to be solemnly offered to God as a part of worship, and as the means of drawing near to him, by expiatory rites, for the forgiveness of sins. Some, it is true, have regarded this distinction of clean and unclean beasts, as



used by Moses, by way of prolepsis, or anticipation; a notion which, if it could not be refuted by the context, would be perfectly arbitrary. Not only are the beasts which Noah was to receive into the ark spoken of as clean and unclean, but in the command to take them into the ark a difference is made in the number to be preserved, the former being to be received by sevens, and the latter by two, of a kind. This shows that this distinction among beasts had been established in the time of Noah; and thus the assumption of a prolepsis is refuted. In the law of Moses a similar distinction is made; and there two reasons appear for it,—that, in this manner, those victims which God would allow to be used for piacular purposes might be known; and those animals be designated which were permitted to be used for food. The former only can be considered as the ground of this distinction among the antediluvians; for the latter did not exist. The critical attempts which have been made to show that animals were allowed to man for food previous to the flood have wholly failed.

A second argument is furnished by the prohibition of blood for food, after animals had been granted to man for his sustenance, as well as the “herb of the field.” This prohibition is repeated by Moses to the Israelites, with an explanation: “I have given it upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls.” From this “additional reason,” as it has been called, it has, indeed, been argued, that the doctrine of the atoning power of blood was new, and was then, for the first time, announced by Moses, or the same reason for the prohibition would have been given to Noah. To this we may reply, 1. That, unless the same reason be supposed, as the ground of the prohibition of blood to Noah, as that given by Moses to the Jews, no reason at all can be conceived for this restraint being put upon the appetite of mankind, from Noah to Moses; and yet we have a prohibition of a most solemn kind, which, in itself, could have no reason, enjoined without any external reason being either given or conceivable. 2. That it is a mistake to suppose that the declaration of Moses to the Jews—that God had “given them the blood for an atonement”—is an additional reason for the interdict, not to

be found in the original prohibition to Noah: The whole passage in Lev. xvii. is, "And thou shalt say to them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: And I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: For it is the blood" (or life) "that maketh an atonement for the soul." The great reason, then, of the prohibition of blood is, that it is the life; and what follows respecting atonement is exegetical of this reason; the life is in the blood, and the blood, or life, is given as an atonement. Now, by turning to the original prohibition in Genesis, we find that precisely the same reason is given: "But the flesh with the blood, which is the life thereof, shall ye not eat." The reason, then, being the same, the question is, whether the exegesis added by Moses must not necessarily be understood in the general reason given for the restraint to Noah. Blood is prohibited for this reason,—that it is the life; and Moses adds, that it is "the blood" (or life) "which makes atonement." Let any one attempt to discover any reason for the prohibition of blood to Noah in the mere circumstance that it is the life, and he will find it impossible. It is no reason at all, moral or instituted, except that as it was life substituted for life,—the life of the animal in sacrifice for the life of man; and that it had a sacred appropriation. The manner, too, in which Moses introduces the subject is indicative that, although he was renewing a prohibition, he was not publishing a new doctrine: He does not teach his people that God had then given or appointed blood to make atonement; but he prohibits them from eating it because he had made this appointment, without reference to time, and as a subject with which they were familiar. Because the blood was the life, it was sprinkled upon, and poured out at, the altar; and we have in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and the sprinkling of its blood, a sufficient proof that, before the giving of the law, not only was blood not eaten, but was appropriated to a sacred sacrificial purpose. Nor was this confined to the

Jews; it was customary with the Romans and Greeks, who, in like manner, poured out and sprinkled the blood of victims at their altars; a rite derived, probably, from the Egyptians, as they derived it, not from Moses, but from the sons of Noah. The notion, indeed, that the blood of the victims was peculiarly sacred to the gods, is impressed upon all ancient pagan mythology.

Thirdly. The sacrifices of the patriarchs were those of animal victims; and their use was to avert the displeasure of God from sinning men. Thus, in the case of Job, (who, if it could be proved that he did not live before the law, was, at least, not under the law, and in whose country the true patriarchal theology was in force,) the prescribed burnt-offering was made for the averting the wrath of God which was kindled against Eliphaz and his two friends; "lest," it is added, "I deal with you after your folly." The doctrine of expiation could not, therefore, be more explicitly declared. The burnt-offerings of Noah, also, after he left the ark, served to avert the "cursing of the ground any more for man's sake," that is, for man's sin; and the "smiting any more every thing living." In like manner, the end of Abel's offering was pardon and acceptance with God; and by it these were attained, for "he obtained witness that he was righteous." But as this is the first sacrifice which we have on record, and has given rise to some controversy, it may be considered more largely; at present, however, the only question is its expiatory character.

As to the matter of the sacrifice, it was an animal offering. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground: And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof;" or, more literally, "the fat of them," that is, according to the Hebrew idiom, the fattest or best of his flock. Le Clerc and Grotius would understand Abel to have offered the wool and milk of his flock; which interpretation, if no critical difficulty opposed it, would be rendered violently improbable by the circumstance, that neither wool nor milk is ever mentioned in Scripture as fit oblations to God. To translate the word rendered "firstlings," by "best and finest," and to suppose an



ellipsis, and supply it with wool, is wholly arbitrary, and contradicted by the import of the word itself. But, as Dr. Kennicott remarks, the matter is set at rest by the context: "For if it be allowed by all, that Cain's bringing of the fruit of the ground means his bringing the fruit [itself] of the ground, then Abel's bringing of the firstlings of his flock must, likewise, mean his bringing the firstlings of his flock" themselves.\*

This is further supported by the import of the phrase, *ωλειονα θυσιαν*, used by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, when speaking of the sacrifice of Abel. Our translators have rendered it, "a more excellent sacrifice." Wickliffe translates it, as Archbishop Magee observes, uncouthly, but in the full sense of the original, "a much more sacrifice;" and the controversy which has arisen on this point is, whether this epithet of "much more," or "fuller," refers to quantity or quality; whether it is to be understood in the sense of a more abundant or of a better, a more excellent, sacrifice. Dr. Kennicott takes it in the sense of measure and quantity, as well as quality; and supposes that Abel brought a double offering of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fruit of the ground also. His criticism has been very satisfactorily refuted by Archbishop Magee;† and Mr. Davison, who has written an acute work in reply to those parts of that learned Prelate's work "on the Atonement" which relate to the divine origin of the primitive sacrifices, has attempted no answer to this criticism, but only observes that "the more abundant sacrifice is the more probable signification of the passage, because it is the more natural force of the term *ωλειονα*, when applied to a subject, as *θυσιαν*, capable of measure and quantity." This is but assumption; for we read the term in other passages of Scripture,‡ where the idea of quantity is necessarily excluded, and that of superiority and excellence of quality is as necessarily intended. But why is this stress laid on quantity? Are we to admit the strange principle that an offering is acceptable

\* Two Dissertations. See, also, Magee's Discourses.

† Discourses on Atonement.

‡ As in Matt. vi. 25: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"



to God because of its quantity alone ; and that the quantity of sacrifice—when even no measure has been prescribed by any law of God—has an absolute connexion with the state of the heart of an offerer ? Frequency or non-frequency of offering might have some claim to be considered as this indication ; but, certainly, the quantity of gifts where—according to the opinion of those, generally, who adopt this view—sacrifices had not yet been subjected to express regulation, would be a very imperfect index of the mind. If the quantity of a sacrifice could at all indicate, under such circumstances, any moral quality, that quality would be gratitude ; but then we must suppose Abel's offering to have been eucharistic. Here, however, the sacrifice of Abel was that of animal victims, and it was indicative, not of gratitude, but of faith, a quality not to be made manifest by the quantity of an offering made, for the one has no relation to the other ; and the sacrifice itself was, as we shall see, of a strictly expiatory character.

This will more fully appear if we look at the import of the words of the Apostle in some views, which have not always been brought fully out in what has been more recently written on the subject : “ By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts ; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.”

What is the meaning of the Apostle when he says that it was witnessed or testified to Abel that he was righteous ? His doctrine is, that men are sinners ; that all, consequently, need pardon ; and to be declared, witnessed, or accounted, righteous is, according to his style of writing, the same as to be justified, pardoned, and dealt with as righteous. Thus, he argues that Abraham believed God, and it “ was accounted to him for righteousness ; ” “ that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness ; ” “ that he received the sign of circumcision, a seal ”—a visible confirmatory, declaratory, and witnessing mark—“ of the righteousness which he had by faith.” In these cases we have a similarity so striking, that they can scarcely fail to explain each other : In both, sinful men are

placed in the condition of righteous men ; the instrument, in both cases, is faith ; and the transaction is, in both cases also, publicly and sensibly witnessed ; as to Abraham, by the sign of circumcision ; as to Abel, by a visible acceptance of his sacrifice, and the rejection of that of Cain.

But it is said, “ St. Paul affirms that Abel, by the acceptance of his sacrifice, gained the testimony of God that he was a righteous man ; he affirms, therefore, that it was his personal habit of righteousness to which God vouchsafed the testimony of his approbation, by that acceptance of his offering. The antecedent faith in God which produced that habit of a religious life, commended his sacrifice ; and the divine testimony was not to the specific form of his oblations, but to his actual righteousness.”\*

The objections to this view of the matter are many :—

1. It leaves out entirely all consideration of the difference between the sacrifice of Abel and that of Cain, and places the reason of the acceptance of one and the rejection of the other wholly in the moral character of the offerers ; whereas St. Paul most unequivocally places the acceptance of Abel’s offering upon its nature, and the principle of faith which originated it ; for, whether we translate the phrase above referred to “ a more excellent sacrifice,” or “ a more abundant sacrifice,” it is put in contrast with the offering of Cain, and its peculiar nature cannot be left out of the account. By Mr. Davison’s interpretation, the designation given to Abel’s offering by the Apostle is entirely overlooked.

2. The faith of Abel in this transaction is also passed over as a consideration in the acceptance of his sacrifice. It is, indeed, brought in as “ an antecedent faith,” which produced the habit of a religious life, and thus mediately “ commended the sacrifice ;” but, in fact, on this ground, any other influential grace or principle might be said to have commended his sacrifice as well as faith, any thing which tended to produce “ the habit of a religious life,” his fear of God, his love of God, as effectually as his faith in God. There is, then, this

\* Davison’s Inquiry into the Origin and Intent of Primitive Sacrifice.

manifest difference between this representation of the case and that which is given by St. Paul, that the one makes "the habit of a religious life" the immediate, and faith but the remote, reason of the acceptableness of Abel's gifts; whilst the other assigns a direct efficacy to the faith of Abel, and the kind of sacrifice by which that faith was expressed, and of which it was the immediate result.

3. In this chapter the Apostle is not speaking of faith under the view of its tendency to induce a holy life; but of faith as producing certain acts of very various kinds, which, being followed by manifest tokens of the divine favour, showed how acceptable faith is to God, or how it "pleases him," according to his own position laid down in the commencement of the chapter: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Abel had faith, and he expressed that faith by the kind of sacrifice he offered; it was in this way that his faith pleased God; it pleased him as a principle, and by the act to which it led; and that act was the offering of a sacrifice to God different from that of Cain. Cain had not this faith, whatever might be its object; and Cain, accordingly, did not bring an offering to which God had "respect." That which vitiated the offering of Cain was the want of this faith; for his offering was not significant of faith: That which pleased God in the case of Abel was his faith; and he had "respect" to his offering, because it was the expression of that faith; and, upon his faith so expressing itself, God witnessed to him that he was righteous.

So certainly do the words of St. Paul, when commenting upon this transaction, establish it against the author above quoted, that Abel's sacrifice was accepted because of its immediate connexion with his faith; for by faith he is said to have offered it. And all that, whatever it might be, which made Abel's offering differ from that of Cain, whether abundance, or kind, or both, was the result of this faith. So clearly, also, is it laid down by the Apostle, that Abel was witnessed to be righteous, not with reference to any previous "habit of a religious life," but with reference to his faith; and not to his faith because it led to personal righteousness,



but to his faith as expressing itself by his offering "a more excellent sacrifice."

Mr. Davison, in support of his opinion, adopts the argument of many before him, that "the rest of Scripture speaks to Abel's personal righteousness. Thus, in St. John's distinction between Cain and Abel, 'Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Thus, in the remonstrance of God with Cain, that remonstrance with Cain's envy for the acceptance of Abel's offering is directed, not to the mode of their sacrifice, but to the good and evil doings of their respective lives: 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.'"\*

With respect to the words in St. John, they may be allowed to refer to Abel's "personal righteousness," without affecting the statement of St. Paul in the least. It would be a bad rule of criticism fully to explain the comments of one sacred writer upon a transaction, the principle and nature of which he explains professedly, by the remark of another when the subject is introduced only allusively and incidentally. St. John's words must not here be brought in to qualify St. Paul's exposition, but St. Paul's exposition to complete the incidental allusion of St. John. Both Apostles agreed that no man was righteous personally, till he was made righteous by forgiveness, accounted and witnessed righteous by faith; and both agree that from that follows a personal righteousness. If St. John, then, refers to Abel's personal righteousness, he refers to it as flowing from his justification and acceptance with God, and by that personal righteousness the wrath of Cain, which was first excited by the rejection of his sacrifice, was, probably, ripened into the hatred which led to fratricide; for it does not appear that he committed that act immediately upon the place of sacrifice, but at some subsequent period; and, certainly, it was not the antecedent holy life of Abel which first produced Cain's displeasure against his brother, for that is expressly attributed to the transactions on the day in which each brought his



offering to the Lord. St. John's reference to Abel's personal righteousness does not, therefore, exclude a reference also, and even primarily, to his faith as its instrumental cause, and the source of its support and nourishment; and, we may add, that it is St. John's rule, and must be the rule of every New Testament writer, to regard a man's submission to, or rejection of, God's method of saving men by faith, as the best evidence of personal righteousness, or the contrary.

As to Genesis iv. 7, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door;" in order to show that it cannot be proved from this passage, that Abel's offering was accepted because of his personal righteousness, it is not necessary to avail ourselves of Lightfoot's view, who takes "sin" to be the ellipsis of "sin-offering," as in many places of Scripture. For and against this rendering much ingenious criticism has been employed, for which the critics must be consulted.\* The interpretation which supposes Cain to be referred to a sin-offering, an animal victim "lying at the door," is, at best, doubtful; but if this be conceded, the argument framed upon the declaration to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" as though the reason of the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice was in "well doing" in the moral sense only, is wholly groundless, since the Apostle so explicitly refers the reason of the acceptance of his sacrifice to his faith, as before proved. It is enough to show, that there is nothing in these words to contradict St. Paul, even if we take them in the most obvious sense, and omit the consideration that the Hebrew text has, in this place, been disturbed, of which there are strong indications. The passage may be taken in two views. Either to "do well," may mean to do as Abel had done, namely, to repent and bring those sacrifices which should express his faith in God's appointed method of pardoning and accepting men, thus submitting himself wholly to God; and then it is a merciful intimation that Cain's rejection was not final; but that it depended upon himself, whether he would

\* Nearly all that can be said on this interpretation will be found in Magee's *Discourses on the Atonement*; and Davison's *Reply to his criticism*, in his *Inquiry into the Origin of Primitive Sacrifice*.

seek God in sincerity and truth. Or the words may be considered as a declaration of the principles of God's righteous government over men. "If thou doest well," if thou art righteous and unsinning, "thou shalt be accepted," as such, without sacrifice; "but if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door," and is chargeable upon thee with its consequences; thus, after declaring his moral condition, leaving it to himself to seek pardon in the method established in the first family, and which Cain must be supposed to have known as well as Abel, or, otherwise, we must suppose that they had received no religious instruction at all from Adam their father. To the former view of the sense of the passage it cannot be objected, that to offer proper sacrifices from a right principle cannot be called in the common and large sense "to do well;" for even "to believe" is called "a work" by our Saviour; and the sacrifice of Abel was, moreover, an act, or a series of acts, which were the expressions of his faith, and therefore might be called a "doing well" without any violence. Agreeably to this, the whole course of the submission of the Jews to the laws concerning their sacrifices is often, in Scripture, designated by the terms "obedience," and "ways," and "doings." The second interpretation corresponds to the great axiom of moral government alluded to by St. Paul, "This do, and thou shalt live;" which is so far from excluding the doctrine of justification by faith, that it is the ground on which he argues it, inasmuch as it shuts out the justification of men by law when it has once been violated.

If, then, it has been established, that the faith of Abel had an immediate connexion with his sacrifice, and both with his being accepted as righteous, that is, justified, in St. Paul's use of the term, to what had his faith respect? The particular object of the faith of the Elders, celebrated in Hebrews xi., is to be deduced from the circumstances adduced as illustrative of the existence and operation of this great principle, and by which it manifested itself. Let us illustrate this, and then ascertain the objects of Abel's faith also from the manner of its manifestation, from the acts in which it embodied and rendered itself conspicuous.

Faith is, in this chapter, taken in the sense of affiance in God ; and, as such, it can only be exercised toward God as to all particular acts, in those respects in which we have some authority to confide in him. This supposes revelation ; and, in particular, some promise or declaration on his part, as the warrant for every act of affiance. When, therefore, it is said that “ by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death,” it must be supposed that he had some promise or intimation to this effect, on which, improbable as the event was, he nobly relied ; and in the result God honoured his faith above all men. The faith of Noah had immediate respect to the threatened flood, and the promise of God to preserve him in the ark which he was commanded to prepare. The faith of Abraham had different objects. In one of the instances which this chapter records, it respected the gift of the land of Canaan to his posterity, and also the promise of the heavenly inheritance, of which that was the type ; which faith he publicly manifested by “ sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country,” and “ dwelling in tabernacles” rather than fixing his permanent residence in any of its cities, because “ he looked for a city which hath foundations.” In the case of the offering of Isaac, he believed that God would raise his immolated son from the dead ; and the ground of his faith is stated, in verse 18, to be the promise, “ In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The faith of Sarah respected the promise of issue : “ She judged him faithful who had promised.” “ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come,” which faith had for its object the revelation made to him by God as to the future lot of the posterity of his two sons. The chapter is filled with other instances, expressed or implied ; and from the whole, as well as from the nature of the thing, it will appear, that, when the Apostle speaks of the faith of the Elders in its particular acts, he represents it as having respect to some promise, declaration, or revelation of God.

This revelation was necessarily antecedent to the faith ; but it is also to be observed, that the acts by which the faith was represented, whenever it was represented by particular acts,



and when the case admitted it, had a natural and striking conformity and correspondence to the previous revelation. So Noah built the ark, which indicated that he had heard the threat of the world's destruction by water, and had received the promise of his own preservation, and that of his family, as well as that of a part of the beasts of the earth; to which the means of escape, by which his faith was represented, and which it led him to adopt, corresponded. When Abraham went into Canaan, at the command of God, and upon the promise that that country should become the inheritance of his descendants, he showed his faith by taking possession of it for them in anticipation; and his residence there indicated the kind of promise which he had received. When he lived in that promised land in tents, though opulent enough to have established himself in a more settled condition, the very manner in which his faith expressed itself showed that he had received the promise of a "better country," which made him willing to be a "stranger and wanderer on earth;"—for "they that say such things," says the Apostle, namely, that they are strangers and pilgrims, "confessing" it by these significant acts, "declare plainly that they seek a country,—that is, a heavenly." Thus, also, when Moses's faith expressed itself in his refusing to be called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter," this, also, clearly indicated, that he had received a promise of something higher and more excellent than "the riches of Egypt," which he renounced, even "the recompence of the reward," to which, we are told, "he had respect." When his faith manifested itself by his forsaking Egypt at the head of his people, "not fearing the wrath of the King," this indicated that he had received a promise of protection and success, and he, therefore, "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

If, then, all these instances show, that when the faith which the Apostle commends exhibits itself in some particular act, that act has a correspondency to the previous promise or revelation which faith must have for its ground and reason, then are we constrained to interpret the acts of Abel's faith so as to make them also correspond with some antecedent revelation; or, rather, we must suppose that the antecedent revelation,



though not expressly stated, (which, also, is the case in several other of the instances which are given in the chapter,) must have corresponded with them. His faith had respect to some previous revelation; and the nature of the revelation is to be collected from the significant manner in which he declared his faith in it.

Now, that which Abel did by faith was, generally, to perform an act of solemn worship, in the confidence that it would be acceptable to God. This supposes a revelation, immediate or by tradition, that such acts of worship were acceptable to God, or his faith could have had no warrant, and would not have been faith, but fancy. But the case must be considered more particularly: His faith led him to offer "a more excellent sacrifice" than that of Cain; but this as necessarily implies that there was some antecedent revelation, to which his faith, as thus expressed, had respect, and on which that peculiarity of his offering which distinguished it from the offering of Cain, was founded; a revelation which indicated that the way in which God would be approached acceptably, in solemn worship, was by animal sacrifices. Without this, too, the faith to which his offering—which was an offering of the firstlings of his flock—had a special fitness and adaptation, could have had no warrant in divine authority. But this revelation must have included, in order to its being the ground of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for," a promise of a benefit to be conferred, in which promise Abel might confide; but, if so, then this promise must have been connected, not with the worship of God in general, or performed in any way whatever indifferently, but with his worship by animal oblations; for it was in this way that the faith of Abel indicated itself, specially and distinctively. The antecedent revelation was, therefore, a promise of a benefit to be conferred by means of animal sacrifice; and we are taught what this benefit was by that which was actually received by the offerer: "He obtained witness that he was righteous;" which, if the notion of his antecedent righteousness has been refuted, must be interpreted in the sense of a declaration of his personal justification and acceptance as righteous, upon

forgiveness of his sins. The reason of Abel's acceptance and of Cain's rejection is hereby made manifest: The one, in seeking the divine favour, conformed to his established and appointed method of being approached by guilty men; and the other not only neglected this, but profanely and presumptuously substituted his own inventions.

It is impossible, then, to allow the act of Abel, in this instance, to have been an act of faith, without allowing that it had respect to a previous and appropriate revelation; a revelation which agreed with all the parts of that sacrificial action by which he expressed his faith in it. Had Abel's sacrifice been eucharistic merely, it would have expressed gratitude, but not faith; or if faith, in the general sense of confidence in God that he would receive an act of grateful worship, and reward the worshippers, it did not more express faith than the offering of Cain, who surely believed these two points, or he would not have brought an offering of any kind. The offering of Abel expressed a faith which Cain had not; and the doctrinal principles which Abel's faith respected were such as his sacrifice visibly embodied. If it was not an eucharistic sacrifice, it was an expiatory one; and, in fact, it is only in a sacrifice of this kind that it is possible to see that faith exhibited which Abel had, and Cain had not. By subsequent sacrifices of expiation, then, is this early expiatory offering to be explained; and from these it will be obvious to what doctrines and principles of an antecedent revelation the faith of Abel had respect, and which his sacrifice, the exhibition of his faith, proclaimed: Confession of the fact of being a sinner; acknowledgment of the demerit and penalty of sin and death; submission to an appointed mode of expiation; (animal sacrifice offered vicariously, but, in itself, a mere type of a better sacrifice,—“the Seed of the woman,” appointed to be offered at some future period;) the efficacy of this appointed method of expiation to obtain forgiveness, and to admit the guilty into the divine favour.

For these reasons, we think that the conclusion of many of our ancient Divines, so admirably embodied in the following words of Archbishop Magee, is not too strong, but is fully

supported by the argument of the case, as founded upon the brief but very explicit declarations of the history of the transaction in Genesis, and by the comment upon it in the Epistle to the Hebrews :—

“ Abel, in firm reliance on the promise of God, and in obedience to his command, offered that sacrifice which had been enjoined as the religious expression of his faith ; whilst Cain, disregarding the gracious assurances that had been vouchsafed, or, at least, disdaining to adopt the prescribed mode of manifesting his belief, possibly as not appearing to his reason to possess any efficacy or natural fitness, thought he had sufficiently acquitted himself of his duty in acknowledging the general superintendence of God, and expressing his gratitude to the Supreme Benefactor, by presenting some of those good things which he thereby confessed to have been derived from his bounty ; in short, Cain, the first-born of the fall, exhibits the first-fruits of his parents’ disobedience, in the arrogance and self-sufficiency of reason rejecting the aids of revelation, because they fell not within its apprehension of right. He takes the first place in the annals of Deism ; and displays, in his proud rejection of the ordinance of sacrifice, the same spirit which, in later days, has actuated his enlightened followers, in rejecting the sacrifice of Christ.”

If it should be asked what evidence have we from Scripture that such an antecedent revelation as that to which we have said Abel’s faith must have had respect was made, the reply is, that if this rested only upon the necessary inferences which, in all fairness and consistency of interpretation, we must draw from the circumstances of the transaction, when combined with the Apostle’s interpretation of it, the ground would be strong enough to enable us to defend it against both the attacks of Socinians, and of those orthodox Divines who, like Mr. Davison, would wrest it from us, as an unnecessary post to be taken in the combat with the impugnors of the Christian doctrine of atonement, or one which is rather injurious than otherwise to the efficiency of the more direct argument. “ Such expositions,” says Mr. Davison, “ do evil and disservice to truth ; they bring in a wrong principle ; they enforce a com-



ment without a text. Such a principle is undoubtedly wrong, and has been the source of much religious speculation." Much of this we grant, and feel the importance of the caution ; but it does not here apply. It is not enough to say that the "text" is not in the Mosaic history ; we must prove that it is not in the New Testament, or necessarily implied in its comments upon, and inferences from, Old Testament facts and relations. The "text" itself, supposed to be wanting, may be in St. Paul ; and even the comment of an inspired writer often supplies the text, and his reasoning, the premises which, in so many words, are wanting in the brief and veiled narrative of Moses. An uninspired comment, we grant, has not this prerogative ; but an inspired one has, which is an important consideration, not to be overlooked. When we say that the manna which fell in the wilderness represented the supply of the spiritual Israel with the true bread which comes down from heaven, Mr. Davison might reply, "This is the comment ; but where is the text ?" We acknowledge that the text upon which this comment is hung is not in the history of Moses ; but the authority of this comment, and, if we may so speak, an implied text itself, is to be found in the words of our Lord, who calls himself "that bread ;" and in the words of St. Paul, who terms the manna the spiritual or typical bread. If we allege that the rock which, when smitten, poured forth its stream to refresh the fainting Israelites, was a figure of Christ, it might, in like manner, be urged, that the text is wanting ; and, certainly, we should not gather that doctrine from the history of Moses ; yet the comment is not ours, but that of the Apostle, who says, "That Rock was Christ," which can only be understood as asserting that it was an instituted and appointed type of Christ. Where we have no intimation of such adumbrations in the persons and transactions of the Old Testament, we are not at liberty to invent them, nor can we justly carry them beyond what is expressed by our inspired authority, or naturally and fairly to be inferred from it. On the other hand, we are bound not to interpret the Old Testament without reference to the New ; and not to disregard that light which the perfect revelation affords.



not only by its direct effulgence, but by its reflections upon the history of our redemption, up to the earliest ages.

If it be argued, from the silence of the Mosaic history, that such types and allusions were not understood as such by the persons among whom they were first instituted, the answer is, 1. That though they should not be thought capable of understanding them as clearly as we do, yet it must be supposed that the spiritual among them had their knowledge and faith greatly assisted by them, and that they were among those wondrous things of the law which were, in some measure, revealed to those who prayed, with David, that their eyes might be opened "to behold them;" otherwise they were totally without religious use during all the ages previous to Christianity; and we must come to the conclusion, that the whole system of types was without edification to the Jews, and is instructive only to us. If we conclude thus as to types, we may come to the same conclusion as to the prophecies of Messiah; to the spiritual meaning and real application of many of which, there appears to be as little indication of a key as to the types. But this cannot be granted; for St. Peter tells us, that of this "salvation the Prophets searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The prophecies could, probably, be but dimly interpreted; but something was known of their general meaning, something important was obtained, by "searching," to reward the search into their import. The same discovery of the general import and bearing of the types must also have rewarded a search equally eager and pious. If this is not allowed, then they were not types to the ancient church; a position which is contradicted by St. Paul, who declares, as to one instance, which may serve for the rest,—namely, the entering of the High Priest alone once every year into the inner tabernacle,—that, by this, "the Holy Ghost signified that the way to the holiest was not yet made manifest;" and that the tabernacle itself, including, of course, its services, "was a figure for

the time then present, in " (or during) " which gifts and sacrifices were offered."

But, 2. We have, in one of the instances before adverted to in Hebrews xi., a direct proof of a distinct revelation, which is nowhere recorded in the Mosaic history separate from the temporal promise in which it appears to have been involved. By faith Abraham, having received the promise of Canaan as "a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance," went to sojourn there: But by faith also he sojourned in this land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents; "for he looked for a city which had foundations," for the "heavenly state;" and by that act he, and Isaac, and Jacob, "the heirs with him of the same promise," declared plainly that they "desired a better country, even a heavenly." Of this better country they then received a promise, which promise is not distinctly recorded in the history of Moses; and it must, therefore, have been either included in the promise of Canaan, which was made to them and their descendants as a type, an understood type, of the eternal and heavenly rest; (which is agreeable to the allusions of St. Paul in other parts of the Epistle;) or else it was matter of separate and unrecorded revelation. In either view the history of Moses is silent; and yet we are compelled, by the comment of the Apostle, and in opposition to the argument which Mr. Davison and others found upon that silence, to allow either a collateral revelation separate from the promise of Canaan, or that that promise itself had a mystic sense which became the object of their faith; and thus the inspired comment of the Apostle supplies a text wanting in the history, or an enlarged interpretation of that which is found in it.

With this case of Abraham Mr. Davison is evidently perplexed, and feels how forcibly it bears against his own rules of interpreting the Mosaic history of the religion of those early ages. He justly contends, against Grotius and Le Clerc, that the object of the faith recorded in Hebrews xi. was not always a temporal one. But then he proposes to show "how God, without having granted to those Patriarchs the explicit revelation of an eternal heavenly state, a revelation which is nowhere

exhibited in the Pentateuch, trained them to the aim and implicit persuasion of that eternal state by large and indefinite promises of being 'their God' and 'their great reward,'—promises to which the present life, as to them, furnished no adequate completion." Thus, then, we are to conclude, that the heavenly state to which these Patriarchs looked, was a matter of entire inference from the promise that God would be their God and their reward, and from the consideration that nothing had occurred to them, in this present life, to be adequate to these promises. To the latter we may reply, that, if this were the only ground of their faith, they could not have made the inference till the close of life; for, how could they know that something adequate to these promises, if not previously explained to refer chiefly to the future state, might not yet, though after much delay, occur to them? But they had this faith from the very giving of the promises, and therefore it was not left to future inference from circumstances. With respect to the former, that they inferred that there was a heavenly state, from the promise to Abraham, "I will be thy God," when no previous "explicit revelation" of a future state was made; it not only supposes that the Patriarchs had no revelation at all of a future life, no knowledge of the soul's immortality, or of a general judgment, of which, indeed, "Enoch prophesied;" but it is inconsistent with the public and expressive action, (an action probably intended to be instructive as a symbolical one to all with whom Abraham was connected in Canaan,) that he "dwelt in tents," in order "to declare plainly that he sought a better country." This, surely, was not an action to be founded upon a probable, but still uncertain, inference from the unexplained general promise, "I will be thy God;" but one which was suited only to express a firm faith in an explicit revelation and a particular promise.

But the whole of this theory is swept away entirely by the declaration of the Apostle: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises;" that is, the things promised; "but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers



and pilgrims on the earth ;"—“strangers,” not at home ; “pilgrims,” journeying to it. Now, this home, this “better country which they sought, the Apostle here expressly says, was not to them matter of inference, but the subject of “promises,” in the faith of which they both lived and died.

In the case of Abel’s offering, as in those just given, the inspired comment of the Apostle supplies the text to the history ; or, in other words, it so illustrates and enlarges our knowledge of the transaction, in its principles and antecedent circumstances, that we are bound to understand it not as persons who have not this additional information, or those who choose to disregard it, but as it is explained upon authority not to be questioned. Abel, says the Apostle, offered his more excellent sacrifice “by faith ;” and faith must have respect to a preceding revelation. We have just seen what doctrinal principles were implied in the practice of expiatory sacrifices ; and if Abel’s sacrifice was of this kind, which is the only satisfactory account that can be given of it, we have no reason to suppose that it included any thing less or lower than those appointed under the law, and which are expressly stated to be types, and figures, and shadows of the evangelical expiation of sin. An antecedent revelation to this effect must therefore be supposed as the ground of his faith. But we are not left wholly to inference ; we have an account, though brief, of such a revelation itself.

That the account is brief, is no objection. What is written is not, for that reason, to be disregarded. There were, doubtless, reasons sufficiently wise why the history of the patriarchal ages was not more largely given. If it were only to exercise our diligence, and to lead us to resort to what has been called “the analogy of faith,” and to interpret Scripture by Scripture, the reason would be important. In arguing from this brevity or silence, however, both against the divine institution of primitive sacrifice, and the evangelical interpretation of the sacrifice of Abel, some writers are apt to overlook the fact, that the Book of Genesis is but a sketch of this period of ancient history ; that it is so throughout, and that it nowhere professes to be more. Arguments of this kind—as that of Bishop



Warburton, who thinks it strange, that, if sacrifice were of divine institution, not more is said on so important a subject—seem insensibly to proceed upon the supposition that the Book of Genesis was the ritual and directory of the patriarchal church, as that of Leviticus was the ritual of the Jewish. The absence of any account of the institution and prescribed mode of sacrifice might, in that case, have been thought strange; but it is a brief history, evidently intended only to be introductory to that of God's chosen people, the Jews, whose proper historiographer by divine suggestion Moses became. Moses grounds no argument upon any part of it in favour of his own institutions, except, it may be, an implied one in favour of the peculiar relation of the Jews to God, as the seed of Abraham, to whom the land of Canaan was promised, and with whom a special covenant was made. The history of Abraham he was, therefore, bound to relate more at length, and he has done so; but where no immediate application of former events was to be made in this way, and the object was merely that of brief general instruction, we can see no particular rules binding upon him to omit or to insert any thing, to dilate or to contract his narrative. If we are to argue from the brevity or the omissions of the narrative of the Book of Genesis, we may often fall into great absurdities; and it might, indeed, be almost as fairly argued from the silence of this rapid history of the antediluvian world, that no code of morals was divinely enjoined before the giving of the ten commandments, as that sacrifices were not divinely instituted before the mandates issued from Sinai,—for the silence of the Book of Genesis equally respects both. We rather choose to argue, that as moral obedience must respect a law, and authoritative law must be a revelation from God; so as faith respects doctrine and promise, that doctrine and those promises, if faith be obligatory, must also be a revelation from God: And, again, as we collect from God's displeasure against or favour to certain kinds and courses of moral conduct, that man was under a law which respected morals; so also, from his acceptance of one kind of sacrifice, and his rejection of another, in the case of Cain and Abel, it will for the same reason follow, that man was under a law of sacrifice, and more

especially since the sacrifices to which God, in after ages, had uniform and special respect, were of the same kind as that of Abel,—animal, vicarious, and expiatory. In morals, we must suppose either traditional or personal revelation, or else give to them a human origin or invention; and in worship we have only the same alternative: But to give to primitive morality one origin, and to primitive worship another, to ascribe one to God, and another to man, is to form a very incongruous system, and to involve ourselves in great difficulties. We must suppose Adam to have been an inspired teacher of morals, but to have left worship indifferent; or, if we may exclude traditional revelation, and assume that every man was taught personally by God in those times, that God made revelations of his law, but none of his grace; that he revealed the standard by which every man might discover his sin and danger, but that he made no discovery of the means by which a man, painfully sensible of his guilt and liableness to the punishment, might approach him so as to obtain his forgiveness and blessing.

But, beside this, it is easy to collect, from the sacred record in the early part of Genesis, brief as it is, no unimportant information of the theology which existed in the first family, even prior to the sacrifice of Abel. That man was under law, is certain; that death was the penalty of sin, is equally certain; that the first pair sinned, and that they did not die, notwithstanding the law, were obvious facts; that the terms of their probation were changed, and that they were not shut out for ever from the divine regard, were circumstances equally clear; and also that they had means of approach to God, means of obtaining his favour, means of sanctification, means of obtaining eternal life, must also be necessarily inferred. Claims of justice and yearnings of mercy in God were seen at natural and legal variance and opposition; and if these were harmonized, (and harmonized they were, or “the Lamb” could not be said to have been slain “from the foundation of the world,”) then must we suppose that there was some indication of this wisdom of God revealed for a practical end; the necessity of which must always have existed, to

prevent despair on the one hand, and a presumptuous disregard of the divine laws on the other. Though the manifestation of this truth might be made in figurative language, or symbolical action, yet it must have been substantially made, or it could not have been practical and influential. A veiled truth is yet a truth, though veiled. A shadow indicates the outline of the substance, though a shadow ; and the sun, though shrouded with clouds, fills the hemisphere with light, though not with brightness ; for day, however clouded, is far different from night. We cannot conceive of a theology at all suited, in any practical degree, to man's fallen state, unless it comprehend the particulars we have given, as well as the knowledge of the existence and perfections of God ; and if we find an express indication of the evangelical method of saving man by the interposition of the incarnate Son of God, we may be sure that all which this indication, when fairly interpreted, contains, was known to Abel before he offered his sacrifice ; and, both from the brevity of the narrative, and the office of Adam as the teacher of religion to his children, we might also infer, that this indication was matter of converse and explanation.

It is in the first promise that this indication is to be found ; and here we shall join issue with Mr. Davison as to its import, and the extent in which its meaning must have been understood in the first family.

In another part of this work it has been established, that this prophetic promise must be understood symbolically, and that it contained the first manifestation of Messiah. This, indeed, Mr. Davison acknowledges ; but denies that his divine nature, incarnation, the vicarious nature of his sufferings, and their atoning efficacy, could be inferred from it. As his remarks comprise all that can be said against the commonly-received opinion that it contained an intimation of all these, we may quote them. They include some truth, and much error. " One object of faith has been always the same ; that object is the Redeemer. The original promise in paradise created this prospect of faith, to be the light and hope of the world for ever ; but that original promise could not be inter-



preted, by itself, into the several parts of its appointed completion. The general prediction of the Redeeming Seed,—‘It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,’—though adequate, in the mind of God, to the determinate form of the Christian redemption, could not be so deduced into its final sense by the mind of man. And since there is no other promise or prediction extant applicable to the faith of the first ages, and explanatory of the mode of the Christian redemption, we can justly ascribe no other knowledge of that redemption to those ages than such as is comprehended in the proper and apparent sense of the first evangelical promise, in which the particular notion of a sacrifice of expiation or atonement, or, indeed, of any sacrifice, was then impossible to be discovered. It was the office of later revelation to fill up the design of this promise; and revelation alone could do it; for the deductions of supernatural truth are not within the sphere of human intellect. They are not to be inferred as discoverable conclusions from one primary principle. A Redeemer being foretold, his divine nature, his incarnation, the vicarious nature of his sufferings, his death, and the atoning efficacy of it,—all these, though real connexions of truth comprehended, with the original promise, in the scheme of the divine economy, came down to man like new streams of light, by these separate channels; and when they are communicated in their proper form, then we know them; not before.”\*

One very misleading notion, as the reader will perceive from what has been already said, lies at the bottom of these remarks. It is assumed, contrary to evidence, that the Book of Genesis is a complete history of the religious opinions of the Patriarchs; and that they knew nothing on the subject of theology but what appears on the face of the account given by Moses, who touches their theological system but incidentally. We say that this notion is unfounded, not only because we must necessarily infer that, in order to be religious, nay, even moral, men, they knew much more than the rapid Mosaic sketch includes; but we conclude this fact on the authority

\* Inquiry, &c.



of the inspired writers of the New Testament. Thus, for instance, we have seen that Abraham had a revelation of a future state, and that Enoch prophesied of the "coming of the Lord to judgment, with thousands of his saints," though neither of those revelations is recorded by Moses. But though this is sufficient to show that the view taken of the primitive theology by Mr. Davison, and those whose opinions he has undertaken to advocate, is far too narrow, and that his conclusions from such premises must be unsatisfactory; it is not on this ground that his notion of the general and indefinite nature of the first promise shall be refuted. Let it be forgotten, for a moment, that Adam was, naturally, the religious head and religious teacher of his family; that there was always an inspiration in the church of God; that the general promises and prophecies were adapted to excite inquiry; and that spiritual men would always, more or less, as now, be led into the mystery veiled under the letter and symbol; yet, taking the prophecy simply by itself, it will be obvious, from a careful consideration of it, that the view just given does not do it justice, and that it must have been more amply and more particularly understood than Mr. Davison, in support of his hypothesis, would represent. He would have it taken so generally as to be incapable of interpretation "into the several parts of its appointed completion," and to be only able to convey some one general notion of a Deliverer. But why are we to confine it to one general indistinct impression? Why, though the several parts of this prophetic promise should be allowed to be comparatively obscure, and their impression to be general, should it not be considered in the parts of which it is actually composed? And why should not each part have been apprehended separately and distinctively, though yet obscurely? Of several parts the prophecy is, in fact, composed; and to these parts, as well as to the general impression made by the whole, must the attention of the Patriarchs have been necessarily directed. The divine nature, the incarnation, the vicarious nature of Messiah's sufferings, and their atoning efficacy, we are told, came to man "by separate channels," and were not in any way to be apprehended in this promise.

In their further and full developement we grant this ; but let us see whether this promise, interpreted even by itself, must not have led the Patriarchs many steps, at least, towards all these doctrines.

The divine nature of the promised Redeemer, we are told, was a separate revelation ; but, surely, this promise clearly indicated that he was to be of a superior nature, not only to man, but to that fell spirit whom he was to subdue, and whose subtlety, power, and malice our first parents had so lamentably experienced ; that he was to deprive him of that dominion which he had acquired over man, and restore the world from the evil effects which it had sustained from the success of his temptations. This was seen in the promise by an easy and natural interpretation, and the step from this to the absolute Divinity of this Restorer, or, at least, to an apprehension of the probability of it, was, certainly, not a large and difficult one. The blessings, too, which he was to procure for sinful man were of such a nature as to give the most exalted ideas of the Being who could bring them back to man, when forfeited by a most righteous sentence. They were spiritual blessings. For, if our first parents were to derive any consolation or benefit from the promise in this life ; if it was to turn their repentance to any account, or to give them any hope and confidence towards God, whom they had offended, to be assured that the head of the serpent should be bruised ; then their attention must have been turned to spiritual blessings as the result of this ; since, in this life, they neither obtained exemption from labour, suffering, nor death. Now, those who adopt the principle of Mr. Davison, and will allow of no revelations in those ages being assumed but those which are recorded by Moses, are bound to allow that there was, in the promise, something which was intended to give religious hope and comfort to the first pair, and to their immediate posterity ; or they cannot account for the existence of religious worship, and the hope which it implies, since there is no other recorded promise of the same antiquity, and they will allow nothing to be assumed besides what is written. If, then, this first promise ministered to the religious hope, faith, and comfort

of our first parents, it turned that hope to the spiritual blessings which they had lost, namely, the favour of God and eternal life ; and to these as coming to them through the bruising of the head of the serpent by the Seed of the woman. The same conclusion we must come to if we adopt, what we appear compelled to do, on apostolic authority, the doctrine of collateral expository revelations ; for these would throw light upon the figurative and symbolic terms of the promise, and show much of its real and spiritual import. In either case we must resort to this promise as the source of that hope of pardon and spiritual victory which, from the time it was given, became an inmate in the bosoms of faithful men, and animated them in their moral conflicts. Whoever, then, the Seed of the woman might be, he was, in this very promise, exhibited as the Restorer of the all-important spiritual blessings of the divine favour,—power over Satan, and eternal life. Thus their notions of his character, and, indeed, of his superior nature, would be still further advanced.

But the bruising of the head of Satan, which could only be understood of a fatal blow to be inflicted on the power which he had acquired over man, and which had displayed itself in the introduction of suffering and death, in the evil dispositions of men towards each other, and all the miseries which so soon sprung up in society, directed their hope also to future blessings as to themselves and their posterity, which blessings could be no less than deliverance from the evils that the subtlety of the serpent had introduced ; namely, as to them, deliverance from affliction and death ; and as to society, a return to primeval purity. Whether they looked for this deliverance by a renovation of the present world, or by the introduction of the pious into another, we cannot say. If our first parents were, for some time, uncertain as to this point, the antediluvian family could not remain so, since the doctrine of a future life was known to Enoch, and, if not before, was revealed to others by the fact of his translation ; and he was but “ the seventh from Adam.” But, whether by the renovation of the earth, and the restoration of the body of man to immortality in this world, or by the resurrection of the body and the glorification of the



soul in a future state, still was such a restoration implied in the promise ; and the person by whom death was to be conquered and sin expelled from man's heart, and immortality and bliss restored, was still "the Seed of the woman." That the Divinity of a Being capable of bestowing such favours was, at least, indicated in the first promise, is not, therefore, too strong a conclusion ; and though new communications of this truth, coming through "separate channels," illustrated the text of this revelation, yet in the channel of the original promise, through which came the first hope of a Redeemer, we see those concomitant circumstances from which it could not but be inferred, that he was, at least, super-human and super-angelic. He was the Seed of the woman, and yet superior to "the archangel fallen ;"—and he was seen in that promise, as he is seen now, though with greater detail of circumstance, as the great medium of pardon, moral renovation, immortality, and eternal life.

It is equally untenable to say, that the doctrine of the incarnation was not to be deduced from the promise before us, but that this also came by "a separate channel." The further revelation of this truth opened for itself various courses, but it is there also. The Being there spoken of as superior to the serpent, and as so superior to man, even in his innocence and perfection, that he should subdue the power which had subdued Adam, and recover what Adam lost, was, nevertheless, to be "the Seed of the woman ;" to be her offspring even in her fallen state ; so that in truth so much of the doctrine of the incarnation was to be deduced from the promise, that this "Seed of the woman" was at once to be man, and more than man. And then as to the doctrine of his "vicarious sufferings" and their efficacy, why should we be compelled wholly to look for the first indication of this to future revelations coming to man through separate and later channels ? These, we again thankfully acknowledge, have been abundantly opened ; but, if we allow Adam and the Patriarchs to have been men of only common powers of reflection, (though to them a very vigorous and even cultivated intellect might in justice be conceded,) then the first indication of this truth also must



have been seen in the first promise. It was comparatively dim and obscure, we grant; but there was a substantive manifestation of it; and, to say nothing of collateral instruction from God himself, it was seen in the first promise, not by difficult and distant, but by near and natural, inference, that the restoration of man should be effected by the sufferings of the Restorer. For what could be understood by "the bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman" in the conflict which was to spring from the enmity put between that Seed (some one distinguished person so called) and the serpent, but a temporary injury and suffering? And why should he sustain the injury rather than any other descendant of the woman, except that the conflict, in which he engaged, was in his character of Redeemer, coming forth to the struggle for man's sake, and for man's rescue? As he was a Being superior to man, and yet man, then is there an indication of his incarnation; if of his incarnation, then it was indicated also that his sufferings were voluntary; for to suffer could not spring from his weakness who was able to subdue, but from the will of him who chose in this way to subdue, the grand enemy. His suffering, then, was for man; and it was voluntary suffering for man; and if voluntary, then was there a connexion between this his temporary voluntary suffering and the bruising of the serpent's head; that is, his conquest over Satan, and the rescue of man from his dominion; in other words, there was an efficacy in his sufferings which connected themselves, not by accident, but by appointment and institution, with man's salvation from those evils, spiritual and corporal, which had been induced by the power and malice of the devil.

Interpreted, then, by itself, there is much more in this promise than Mr. Davison has discovered in it. It exhibited to man the means of his salvation; this was to be effected by the interposition of a Being of a superior nature, made "the Seed of the woman;" his office was to destroy the works of the devil; he exposed himself to voluntary sufferings for this end; these sufferings had a direct efficacy and connexion with man's deliverance from the power of Satan, and therefore we may add, with the justice of God, since Satan could have no power

over man but by God's permission, which permission was a part of man's righteous punishment. This last consideration is of great importance. For as the Patriarchs, with their lofty and clear notions of the majesty of the divine Being could not suppose that Satan had obtained any victory over him, or that the conflict between the Redeemer and him was to be one of power merely, since they must have known that he might at any time have been expelled from his usurped dominion by the fiat of the Almighty ; so the dominion of Satan must have been regarded by them in the light of a judicial permission for the punishment of sin, and exhibiting the awful justice and sanctity of the law of God. It would, therefore, necessarily follow in their reasonings on this subject, that the sufferings of the Seed of the woman, expressed by the "bruising of his heel," as they were demonstrated to be voluntary on his part by the superior greatness of his nature, and were expressly appointed on the part of God, as appears from the very terms of the first promise, were connected with this exercise of punitive justice, and were designed to remove it. Here, then, the notion of satisfaction and atonement breaks in, a basis was laid for the rite of expiatory sacrifice, and the conformity of that rite to the doctrine of the first promise is at once seen ; it thus became a visible expression of the faith of the Fathers in this appointed method of man's deliverance.

There is nothing in this exposition of the import of the first promise which is so suggested by what we now know on these important subjects, as to be supposed out of the reach of the spiritually-minded and reflecting part of the first family ; and if so, then this promise may be considered as the basis of Abel's faith, and its doctrine as visibly embodied in what was peculiar in Abel's offering. Even if we were not able to refer to a promise sufficiently definite to support such an expression of faith, the former view we have taken would still hold good, that all faith necessarily supposes a previous revelation ; and if faith does, by its acts, refer to a particular revelation, then an actual previous revelation of some particular doctrine, object, or view must necessarily be supposed, or it is not faith, but fancy and presumption.

It is vainly urged against this by Mr. Davison, that the faith spoken of by St. Paul in Hebrews xi. had for its simple and general object, that "God is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him." For, though this is supposed as the ground of every act of faith, yet the special acts recorded have each their special object. Even if it were not so, this general principle itself is not to be so generally and indefinitely interpreted as Mr. Davison would have it, who tells us that the first creed was, "that God is a rewarder," and that the other articles were given by successive and distant revelations. This is a partial and delusive statement; for, from this very text, which surely Mr. Davison had no right to curtail, another article is to be assigned to the first creed, namely, that God is not merely a rewarder, but a rewarder of those "that diligently seek him." Even with respect to the first, as Mr. Law justly observes, "God cannot be considered as a rewarder of mankind in any other sense than as he is a fulfiller of his promises made to mankind in the covenant of Messiah. For God could not give, nor man receive, any rewards or blessings, but in and through one Mediator, Christ Jesus."\* But we may add, that the rewarding mentioned by the Apostle is connected with "seeking" him. Only to those "who diligently seek him" he was or is a reward; and this seeking or worshipping God supposes some appointed, instituted method of approaching him, and which, therefore, must be conformed to by an acceptable faith, and recognised by its external acts. This is not mere inference: For both Cain and Abel believed that "God is, and that he is a rewarder," and they both sought him; but they sought him differently; and to Abel only and to his offering, that is, to his mode of "seeking" God, his Maker had respect. But further, the whole chapter shows that, besides this general principle, the acts of faith there recorded reposed on antecedent revelations, either general or specific, which accorded with them. Noah's faith respected the promise of his preservation in the ark: Abraham's, that he should have a son; that his seed should possess the earthly Canaan, and

\* Confutation of Warburton.



he himself the heavenly Canaan : Moses's faith, in the first instance recorded of it, respected the promises of spiritual and eternal blessings to those who should renounce the "pleasures of sin for a season;" and, in the second, the promise of God to deliver Israel, and to fulfil the promise made to Abraham : And so also, in the other instances given, the faith constantly respected some particular revelation from God. From all this it will follow, that the Apostle, in this chapter, did not intend to say that the object of faith in any age whatever was exclusively, that God is a rewarder of them who seek him, but that the Elders who obtained the "good report" had faith in the word and promises of God, and for that had been honoured and rewarded. He lays down two principles, it is true, which must be assumed before any special act of faith can be exercised,—“that God is,” or there could be no object of trust; and that he “rewards them that diligently seek him,” or there could be no motive to prayer, or to ask his interposition in any case; but these principles being admitted, then every word and promise of God becomes an object of faith to good men, who derive from this habit of trusting in God, on the authority of his own engagements, that courage and constancy by which they are distinguished, and are crowned with those rewards which he has always attached to faith.

And here, also, we may observe, that the notion stated above—that a mere belief, by these ancient Patriarchs, that “God is,” and that “he is a rewarder”—could not be at all apposite to the purpose for which this recital of the faith of the Elders was addressed to the Hebrews. The object of it was clearly to induce the Jews who believed, not “to cast away their confidence,” their faith in Christ; but what adaptation to this end can we discern in the dry statement, that Abel and Enoch believed that God is, and that he is a rewarder? Had the Hebrews renounced Christ, and turned Jews again, they would still have believed these two points of doctrine. There are but two views of this recital of the instances of ancient faith which can harmonize it with the Apostle's argument and design : The first is, to consider him as adducing this list of worthies as examples of a steady faith in all that



God had then revealed to man, and of the happy effects which followed. The connexion of this with his argument will then be obvious ; for, by these examples, he urges the Hebrews to persevere in believing all that God had, “ in these last days,” revealed of his Son Jesus Christ, in disregard of the dangers and persecutions to which they were exposed on that account ; because thus they would share in the “ good report ” and in the rewards of the Elders of their own church, and imitate the honourable piety of their ancestry. This is enough for our argument. But there is a second view, not to be slightly passed over, which is, that these instances of ancient faith are adduced by the Apostle to prove that all the Elders of the patriarchal and Jewish churches had faith in the Christ to come ; and that, therefore, the Hebrews would be the imitators of their faith, and the partakers of its rewards, in “ holding fast their confidence,” their faith in the same Christ who had already come, and whom they had received as such. Nor is even this stronger view difficult to be made out ; for, though the different acts and exercises of faith ascribed to them have respect to different promises and revelations, some spiritual, some temporal, and some mixed, yet may we trace in all of them a respect, more or less immediate, to the leading object of all faith,—the Messiah himself. We have seen that Abel’s faith had respect to the method of man’s justification, through the sufferings of the Seed of the woman. As that Seed was appointed to remedy the evils brought into the world by the serpent, it is clear that eternal life could only be expected with reference to him ; and Enoch’s lofty faith in a future heavenly state consequently looked to him then, like that of Christians now, as “ the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him ; ” a conclusion, as to this Patriarch, which is rendered stronger by his having prophesied of Christ’s coming to judgment “ with ten thousands of his saints.” Noah’s faith had immediate respect to the promise of God to preserve him in the ark ; but it cannot be disconnected from his faith in the first promise, and other revelations of the bruising of the head of the serpent by Messiah ; a promise which had not been accomplished, and which, if he believed God to be faith-

ful, he must have concluded could not fall to the ground, and that his preservation—in order to prevent the human race from extinction, and to bring in the Seed of the woman, in the fulness of time—was connected with it. His faith in God, as his Deliverer, was bound up, therefore, we may almost say, necessarily, with his faith in the Redeemer, and the one was the evidence of the other; for which reason, principally, it probably was, that the Apostle says, that “he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” All the acts of Abraham’s faith had respect, immediately or ultimately, to the promised Seed: The possession of Canaan by his posterity, from whom the Messiah was to spring; the enjoyment of eternal life for himself, which was the final effect of his justification by faith, in the Seed in whom all nations were to be blessed; the transaction as to Isaac, when he believed that God would raise him from the dead, because he believed that the promise could not fail which had declared that the Messiah should spring from Isaac,—“In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The faith of Isaac in blessing, or prophesying of the condition of, Jacob and Esau, had still reference to the Messiah, who was to descend from Jacob, not Esau, and the lot of whose posterity was regulated accordingly. The same observation may be made as to Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph, and Joseph making mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and giving commandment concerning his bones: Both related to the settlement of the tribes in Canaan, and both were complicated with the relation of that event to the expected coming of Messias. When Moses, by faith, full of the hope of immortality, renounced the temptations of the Egyptian court, the reproach he endured is called “the reproach of Christ;” St. Paul thus plainly intimating, that it was through the expected Messiah that he looked for the hope of eternal life, “the recompence of the reward.” His faith, as leader of the hosts of Israel, was connected with the promises of God to give them possession of the land of Canaan, as their patrimony, as that was with the advent of the Messiah among them, “in the fulness of time.” The faith of Rahab may appear more remotely connected with the promise of

Messiah ; but the connexion may still be traced : She believed in the God of Israel as the true God ; but, by entertaining and preserving the spies, she also intimated her faith in the promise of God to give the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan for their inheritance, which design she could only know from the promises made to Abraham, either traditionally from him, who had himself long resided in Canaan, or by information from the spies ; and if she had this knowledge, in either way, it is not difficult to suppose her informed, also, as to the Seed promised to Abraham, in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. I incline to think that the faith of Rahab had respect, not so much to any information she received from the spies, as to traditions derived from Abraham. Whether she stood, by her descent, in any near relation to those with whom Abraham had more immediately conversed, or whether Abraham had very publicly testified in Canaan God's design to establish his posterity there, and to raise up from among them the Holy Seed, the Messiah, we cannot pretend to determine ; but there are two reasons which, at least, make it probable that Abraham gave a public testimony to religious truth during his residence in Canaan : The first is, that he dwelt in tents ; thereby " declaring plainly," says the Apostle Paul, " that he sought a better country, even a heavenly ;" that is, declaring it to the Canaanites, or the action would have had no meaning ; declaring this doctrine to the people of his own time. The second is, that the same Apostle gives it as a reason for the preservation of Rahab, that she believed, whilst those " that believed not " perished ; meaning, plainly, the rest of the Canaanites. Now, what were they to believe, and why were they guilty for not believing ? The only rational answer to be given is, that they had had the means of knowing the designs of God as to Abraham and his posterity, from whom the promised Messiah was to spring, and that, not crediting the testimony given first by Abraham, and which was afterwards confirmed by the wonders of Egypt, but setting themselves against the designs of God, they perished judicially, whilst Rahab, on account of her faith in these revelations, was preserved.



With respect to "Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and Daniel, and Samuel," they were Judges, Kings, and conquerors. They had a lofty faith in the special promises of success which God was pleased to make to them; but that faith, also, sprung from, and was supported by, the special relation in which their nation stood to Jehovah: They were the seed of Abraham; they held their land by the grant of the Most High; they were all taught to look for the rising of the mighty Prince Messiah among them; and their faith in special promises of success could not but have respect to all these prior covenant-engagements of God with their people, and may be considered as, in no small degree, grounded upon them, and, in its special acts, as an evidence that they had this faith in the deeper and more comprehensive promises. Certain it is, that one of them mentioned in this list of warriors, David, does, in the very songs in which he celebrates his victories, almost constantly blend them with the conquests of Messiah; which is itself a marked and eminent proof of the connexion which was constantly kept up, in the minds of the pious governors of Israel, between the political fortunes of their nation and the promises which respected the seed of Abraham. As to the Prophets, also mentioned by the Apostle, they were constantly made the channels of new revelations respecting the Messiah; and their faith, therefore, had an immediate reference to him. And for the sufferers in the cause of religious truth, so honourably recorded, the martyrs of the Old Testament, who had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, were stoned, sawn asunder," &c., they are all represented as supported by their hope of immortality and a resurrection; blessings which, from the first, were acknowledged to come to man only through the appointed Redeemer. Thus the faith of all had respect to Christ, either directly or remotely; and, if further proof were necessary, all that has been said is crowned by the concluding sentence of the Apostle: "And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect;" which "better thing," whether it mean the personal



appearance of Messiah, or their reception into heaven by a resurrection which God had determined should take place as to the church collectively, proves, that not only did their faith look back to special promises of succour, deliverance, and other blessings, but was constantly looking forward to Christ, and to the blessings of a resurrection, and that eternal life which he was to bestow. This, he affirms, too, was the case with all whom he had mentioned: "These all died in the faith." But in what faith did they die? Not in the faith they had in the promises of the various deliverances mentioned in the chapter; those special acts of faith were past, and the special promises to which they were directed were obtained long before death. They died in the faith of unaccomplished promises,—the appearing of Messiah, and the obtaining of eternal life through him.

Enough has been already said to prove that the sacrifice of Abel was expiatory; and that it conformed, as an act of faith, to some anterior revelation. If this were only the revelation recorded in the first promise, Abel's faith accorded with its general indication of the doctrine of vicarious suffering; but his representing his faith in these doctrines visibly, by animal sacrifice, is not to be attributed to his own invention and device, though he himself should be assumed to have been the first to adopt this rite. We must even then suppose him to have been under special direction. It is very true, and a point not to be at any time lost sight of, that the open and marked acceptance of Abel's sacrifice was a divine confirmation of the mode of approaching him by animal sacrifice; and seems to have been intended as instructive and admonitory to the world, and to have invested this mode of worship with a renewed and more signal stamp of divine appointment than heretofore. That in this light it was considered by the Apostle, appears plainly deducible from his words: "And by it" (his sacrifice) "he, being dead, yet speaketh." By words more emphatic he could not have marked the importance of that act, as an act of public and sanctioned instruction. Abel spoke to all succeeding ages, and continues to speak, not by his personal righteousness, not by any other circumstance

whatever, but by his sacrifice ; (for with *θυσίας* understood must *αυτης* agree ;) and in no way could he, except by his sacrifice as distinct from that of Cain, speak to future ages, and as that sacrifice taught how sinful, guilty men were to approach God, and was a declaration of the necessity of atonement for their sins. We should think this a sufficient answer to all who complain of the want of an express indication of the divine appointment of animal expiatory sacrifice in the first family. The indication called for is here express, since this kind of sacrifice was accepted, and an offering not animal and not expiatory was as publicly rejected ; and since, also, Abel, as we may conclude from the Apostle's emphatic words, did not act in this affair merely as a private man, but as one who was, by his acts, to instruct and influence others : " By it he, being dead, yet " (even to this day) " speaketh."

Decidedly, however, as this circumstance marked out a sanctioned method of approaching God, we think that Abel rather conformed to a previously-appointed sacrificial institution than that he then, for the first time, offered an animal and expiatory sacrifice, though it should be supposed to be under a divine direction ; for Cain could not have been so blamable, had he not violated some rule, some instituted practice, as to the mode of worship ; and, after all that has been said, the clothing of our first parents with the skins of beasts cannot so well be accounted for as by supposing those skins to have been taken from animals offered in sacrifice.

But whether this typical method of representing the future atonement first took place with Abel, or, previously, with Adam, a divine origin must be assigned to it. The proof of this has been greatly anticipated in the above observations, which have been designed to establish the expiatory character of Abel's offering ; but a few additional remarks on this subject may not be useless.

The human invention of primitive animal sacrifice is a point given up by Mr. Davison, and other writers on the same side, if such sacrifices can be proved expiatory. The human invention of eucharistic offerings they can conceive ; and Mr. Davison thinks he can find a natural explanation of the prac-

tice of offering animal sacrifice, if considered merely as a confession of guilt ; but for “ that condition of animal sacrifice,—its expiatory, atoning power,”—he observes, “ I confess myself unable to comprehend how it can ever be grounded on the principles of reason, or deduced from the light of nature. There exists no discernible connexion between the one and the other. On the contrary, nature has nothing to say for such an expiatory power, and reason every thing against it. For, that the life of a brute creature should ransom the life of a man ; that its blood should have any virtue to wash away his sin, or purify his conscience, or redeem his penalty ; or that the involuntary sufferings of a being, itself unconscious and irrational, should have a moral efficacy to his benefit or pardon, or be able to restore him with God ; these are things repugnant to the sense of reason, incapable of being brought into the scale of the first ideas of nature, and contradictory to all genuine religion, natural and revealed. For as to the remission of sin, it is plainly altogether within the prerogative of God, an act of his mere mercy ; and since it is so, every thing relating to the conveyance and the sanction, the profession and the security, of it, can spring only from his appointment.”

But this being allowed, and nothing can be more obvious, then it follows that the patriarchal sacrifices, if proved to be expiatory, as the means of removing wrath from offenders, and of conveying and sanctioning pardon, must be allowed to have had a divine institution ; and the notion of their being of human device must, in consequence, be abandoned. In proof of this, we have seen that Abel’s justification was the result of his faith, and that this faith was connected with that in his sacrifice which distinguished it from the offering of Cain ; and thus its expiatory character is established, by its having been the means, to him, of the remission of sin, and the appointed medium of the “ conveyance ” and “ security ” of the benefit. We have also seen that Noah’s burnt-offering was connected with the averting of the wrath of God from the future world, so that not even its wickedness should provoke him again “ to destroy all flesh ” by a universal flood ; that the sacrifices



of the friends of Job \* were of the same expiatory character ; and that the reason for the prohibition of blood was, under both dispensations,—the patriarchal and the Mosaic,—the same. To these may be added two passages in Exodus, which show that animal sacrifices, among the patriarchs, were offered for averting the divine displeasure, and that this notion of sacrifice was entertained by the Israelites previous to the giving of the law : “ Let us go, I pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” (Exodus v. 3.) “ Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God.” (Exodus x. 25, 26.) The remark of Dr. Ritchie† is here pertinent : “ In these two passages Moses and Aaron speak of sacrificing, not as a new and uncommon thing, but as an usual mode of worship with which Pharaoh was as well acquainted as themselves, consequently, a thing that was not a late or new invention.” And in pursuance of the same argument it may be noted that Moses, even in the law, nowhere speaks of expiatory sacrifice as a new institution, a rite which was henceforward to be considered as bearing a higher character than formerly ; but as a thing familiar to the people. Now, such an intimation would, doubtless, have been necessary on the very ground just stated,—the repugnancy of animal sacrifices, considered as expiatory, to nature and reason. But to prepare them for such a change, for an institution so repugnant to the former class and order of their notions on this subject, there is nothing said by Moses, no intimation of an alteration in the character of sacrifice is

\* Mr. Davison, in pursuance of his theory that the patriarchal sacrifices were not expiatory, has strangely averred that this transaction is “ a proof of the efficacy of Job’s prayer, not of the expiatory power of the sacrifice of his friends.” Why, then, was not the prayer efficacious without the sacrifice ? And how could the burnt-offering of his friends give efficacy to his prayer, unless by way of expiation ? What is the office of expiatory sacrifice but to avert the anger of God from the offerer ? This was precisely the effect of the burnt-offering of Eliphaz and his friends. That it was connected with the prayer of Job, no more alters the expiatory character of that offering than the prayers which accompanied such offerings under the law.

† Pec. Doctrines.



given ; but a practice manifestly familiar is brought under new and special rules, assigned to certain persons as the sacrificers, and to certain places, and appropriated to the national religion and the system of a theocratical government. Whence, then, did this familiarity with the notion of expiatory sacrifice arise among the Israelites ? If the Book of Genesis were written previously to the law, and they collected the notion from that, then this is proof that they understood the patriarchal sacrifices to be expiatory ; and if, as others think, that book was not written the first in the series of the Pentateuch, but the last, they had the notion from tradition and custom.

Though we think that the evidence of Scripture is of sufficient clearness to establish the divine origin of the antediluvian sacrifices ; and, with Hallet,\* regard the public divine acceptance of Abel's sacrifice as amounting to a demonstration of their institution by the authority of God ; the argument drawn from the natural incongruity of sacrificial rites, on which so many writers have forcibly dwelt, ought not to be overlooked. It comes in to confirm the above deductions from Scripture ; and though it has been sometimes attacked with great ingenuity, it has never been solidly refuted. "It is evident," says Delany,† "that unprejudiced reason never could antecedently dictate, that destroying the best of our fruits and creatures could be an office acceptable to God, but quite the contrary. Also, that it did not prevail from any demand of nature, is undeniable ; for I believe no man will say that we have any natural instinct or appetite to gratify in spilling the blood of an innocent, inoffensive creature upon the earth, or burning his body upon an altar. Nor could there be any temptation from appetite to do this in those ages when the whole sacrifice was consumed by fire, or when, if it were not, yet men wholly abstained from flesh."

The practice cannot be resolved into priestcraft ; for no order of Priests was then instituted ; and if men resolve it into superstition, they must not only suppose that the first family were superstitious, but also that God, by his acceptance

\* In Hebrews xi. 4.

† Revelation Examined.

of Abel's sacrifice, gave his sanction to a superstitious and irrational practice; and if none will be so bold as this, there remains no other resource than to contend for its reasonableness, in opposition to the argument just quoted from Delany; and to aid the case by assuming, also, that it was the dictate of a delicate and enlightened sentimentalism. This is the course taken by Mr. Davison, who has placed what others have urged with the same intent, in the most forcible light; so that, in refuting him, we refute all. To begin with "the more simple forms of oblation;" those offerings of the fruits of the earth, which have been termed eucharistical: "Reason," says Mr. Davison, "seems to recognise them at once; they are the tokens of a commemorative piety, rendering to the Creator and supreme Giver a portion of his gifts, in confession of his original dominion in them, and of his continued favour and beneficence." But this is very far from being a rational account of even simple thank-offerings of fruits; supposing such offerings to have been really made in those primitive times. Of this, in fact, we have no evidence; for we read only of one oblation of this kind,—that of Cain,—and it was not accepted by God. But waving that objection, and supposing such offerings to have formed a part of the primitive worship, from whence, we may ask, did men obtain the notion, that in such acts they gave back to the supreme Giver some portion of his gifts? It is not, surely, assumed by the advocates of this theory, that the first men were like those stupid idolaters of following ages, who thought that the deities themselves feasted upon the oblations brought to their temples. On the contrary, their views of God were elevated and spiritual; and whenever such a Being is acknowledged, it is clear that the notion of giving back any thing to him can only be a rational one when he has appointed something to be done in return for his gifts, or to be appropriated to his service; which leads us at once to the doctrine of a divine institution. The only rational notion of a return to God as an acknowledgment for his favours, when notions of his spirituality and independence are entertained, is that of gratitude, and thanksgiving, and obedience. These form "a reasonable service;" but when we go beyond

these, we may well be at a loss to know "what we can give unto him." If he requires more than these, as acknowledgments of our dependence and his goodness, how should we know that he requires more unless we had some revelation on the subject? And if we had a general revelation, importing that something more would be acceptable, how should we be able to fix upon one particular thing, as the subject of such an oblation, more than another? A divine institution would invest such offerings with a symbolical or a typical character, or both; and then they would have a manifest reason; but, assuredly, independent of that, they would rest upon no rational ground whatever; there could be no discernible connexion betwixt the act and the end, in any case where the majesty and spirituality of God were recognised. Mr. Davison assumes, that, though "the prayer or the oblation cannot purchase the favour of God, it may make us fitter objects of his favour." But, we ask, even if we should allow that prayer makes us fitter objects of his favour, how could we know even this without revelation; or, if we could place this effect to the account of prayer by something like a rational deduction, how could we get the idea, that to approach a spiritual Being, with a few handfuls of fruit gathered from the earth, and to present them in addition to our prayers, should render us the fitter objects of the divine beneficence? There is no rational connexion between the act and the end, on which to establish the conclusion.

Reason failing here, recourse is had to sentiment:—

"In the first dawn of the world, and the beginnings of religion, it is reasonable to think that the direction of feeling and duty was more exclusively towards God. The recent creation of the world, the revelations in Paradise, and the great transactions of his Providence, may well be thought to have wrought a powerful impression on the first race, and to have given them, though not a purer knowledge, yet a more intimate and a more intense perception, of his being and presence. The continued miracle of the actual manifestations of God would enforce the same impressions upon them. These having less scope of action in communion with their fellow-creatures,

in the solitude of life around them, in the great simplicity of the social state, and in the consequent destitution of the objects of the social duties; their religion would make the acts of devotion its chief monuments of moral obligation. Works of justice and charity could have little place. Works of adoration must fill the void. And it is real action, not unembodied sentiment, which the Creator has made to be the master principle of our moral constitution. From these causes some boldness in the form of a representative character, some ritual clothed with the imagery of a symbolical expression, would more readily pass into the first liturgy of nature. Not simple adoration, not the naked and unadorned oblations of the tongue; but adoration invested in some striking and significative form, and conveyed by the instrumentality of material tokens, would be most in accordance with the strong energies of feeling, and the insulated condition of the primitive race." \*

Two or three observations will be sufficient to dissipate all these fancy pictures: 1. It is not true that the "recent creation of the world, the revelations in Paradise," &c., made that great moral impression upon the first men which is here described. That impression did not keep our first parents from sin; much less did it produce this effect upon Cain and his descendants; nor upon "the sons of God," the race of Seth, who soon became corrupt; and so wickedness rapidly increased, until the measure of the sin of the world was filled up. 2. It is equally unfounded, that in that state of society "works of justice and charity could have little place, and that works of adoration must fill the void;" for the crimes laid to the charge of the antediluvians are wickedness, and especially violence, which is opposed both to justice and to charity; and it is impossible to suppose any state of society existing, since the fall, in which both justice and charity were not virtues of daily requirement, and that in their constant and vigorous exercise. Cain, for instance, needed both; for he grossly violated both in hating and murdering his brother. 3. That

\* Primitive Sacrifice.



strongly active devotional sentiment which Mr. Davison supposes to exist in those ages, which required something more to embody and represent it than prayer and praise, and which with so much plastic energy is assumed to have clothed itself "with the imagery of a symbolical expression," is equally contradicted by the facts of the case. There was no such excess of the devotional principle. On Mr. Davison's own interpretation of "the more abundant sacrifice," more in quantity, one of the two brothers, first descended from the first pair, was deficient in it; the rapidly spreading wickedness of man shows that the religious sentiment was weak and not powerful; it is not seen even in the perverted forms of idolatry and superstition, for neither is charged upon the antediluvians, but moral wickedness only; and instead of their having "a more intense perception of the being and presence of God," as Mr. Davison imagines for them, Moses declares "the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man to be only evil continually," and that even long before the flood, and whilst men were still alive who had conversed with Adam. Thus pass away the fancies on which this theory is built; nor is that of Bishop Warburton better supported, who resolves these early oblations into a "representation by action," arising out of the "defects and imperfections of the primitive language;" for of these defects and imperfections there is not only not the least evidence, but the irresistible inference from the narrative of Moses is, that a language was in use in the first family sufficiently copious for all subjects of religion, as well as for the common intercourse of life. This notion also further involves the absurdity and contradiction, that, when man was created in perfection, he should not be endowed with the power of embodying his thoughts in language.

If, then, the presentation of the mere fruits of the earth to God, as thank-offerings and acknowledgments of dependence, cannot be reasonably accounted for without supposing a divine institution, the difficulty is increased when animal oblations are added to these offerings, and considered also as merely eucharistical. All the difficulties just mentioned lie with equal force against such a designation of them, with these

additional considerations, 1. That the putting beasts to death is an act farther removed from the idea of a mere oblation, since nothing would, without a revelation, appear less acceptable to a merciful and benevolent Being. 2. A moral objection would also interpose: Man's dominion of the creatures was from God; but it was to be exercised, like his power of every other kind, upon his responsibility. Wanton cruelty to animals must, of necessity, have been considered a moral evil. To inflict pain and death upon even the noxious animals without so clear a necessity as should warrant it, and without its being necessary to the subduing of the earth, could not be thought blameless, much less upon the innoxious animals which, from the beginning, were the only subjects of sacrifice. This would be felt the more strongly before flesh had been permitted to man for food, and when, so to speak, a greater sacredness was thrown around the life of the domestic animals than afterwards; nor can it appear reasonable (even if we were to allow that a sort of sentimentality might lead man to fix upon the oblation of slain beasts as an expressive ritual to be added to the liturgy of nature) that, without any authority, any intimation from heaven that such sacrifices would be well pleasing to God, men could conclude that a mere sentimental notion of ceremonial fitness, and giving "boldness to the representative character" of worship, would be a sufficient moral reason to take of their flocks and herds, and shed their blood, and burn their flesh upon altars. Mr. Davison endeavours to meet the objection to the natural incongruity of animal sacrifices as acts of worship, by distinguishing between the two conditions of animal sacrifice,—“the guilt of the worshipper, and the expiation of his sin.” Expiatory sacrifice, we have seen, he gives up, as not for a moment to be referred to human invention; but thinks that there was no natural incongruity in the offering of animals as a mere acknowledgment of guilt, and as a confession of sin, and the desert of death. But still, if we could trace any connexion between this symbolical confession and the real case of man, (which is difficult, if not impossible,) what could lead man to the idea that more than simple confession of sin by the lips, and the penitent

feelings of the heart, would be acceptable to God, if he had received no revelation on the subject? And if this, like the former, were a device of mere ceremonial sentimentalism, it was still too frail a ground to justify his putting the inferior creatures to death without warrant from their Creator and Preserver. It is also equally unfortunate for this theory, and, indeed, wholly fatal to it, that the distinction of clean and unclean beasts existed, as we have already seen, before the flood. Upon what, then, was this distinction founded? Not upon their qualities as good for food or otherwise, for animals were not yet granted for food; and the death of one animal would, therefore, have been just as appropriate, as a symbol of gratitude, or as an acknowledgment of the desert of death, as another,—a horse as a heifer, a dog as a lamb. Nay, if animals were intended to represent the sinner himself, unclean and ferocious animals would have been fitter types of his fallen and sinful state; and that they were to be clean, harmless, and without spot, shows that they represented some other. The distinction of clean and unclean, however, did exist in that early period; and it is only to be accounted for by referring it to a sacrificial selection, and that upon divine authority.

To the human invention of sacrifice the objection of will-worship has also been forcibly and triumphantly urged: “Who hath required this at your hands?” “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” This has the force of an axiom, which, if it ought not to be applied too rigidly to the *minutiæ* of worship when they connect themselves with authorized leading acts, yet must have a direct application to a worship which, in its substance and leading circumstance, was eminently sacrificial. “Thus,” says Hallet, “Abel must have worshipped God in vain, if his sacrificing had been merely a commandment of his father Adam, or an invention of his own;” and he justly asks, “Why do we not now offer up a bullock, a sheep, or a pigeon, as a thank-offering, after any remarkable deliverance, or as an evidence of our apprehensions of the demerit of sin?” The sure reason is, because we cannot know that God will accept



such will-worship ; and so conclude that we should herein worship God in vain.

The divine institution of expiatory sacrifice being thus carried up to the first ages, and to the family of the first sinning man, we perceive the unity of the three great dispensations of religion to man—the patriarchal, the Levitical, and the Christian—in the great principle, “And without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” But one religion has been given to man since his fall, though gradually communicated. “This may be best denominated ‘the ministry of reconciliation ;’ for its exclusive object, however modified externally, is to satisfy God’s justice, through the instrumentality of the woman’s predicted Seed ; to restore fallen man to the divine image of holiness, by the agency of the gracious Spirit ; and thus, without compromising any one of God’s attributes, to reconcile an apostate race to their offended Creator.”\*

We have now adduced the scriptural evidence of the atonement made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world ; a doctrine not speculative and indifferent, but vital to the whole scheme of Christianity ; a doctrine which tends to produce the most awful sense of sin, and to afford the most solemn motive to repentance ; which at once excites the most sublime views of the justice and mercy of God, and gives the most affecting exhibition of the compassion and love of Christ ; which is the only ground of faith in the pardoning love of God, and the surest guard against presumption ; and which, by opening access to God in prayer, keeps before man a safe and secure refuge amidst the troubles of life, and in the prospect of eternity. It is the only view, too, of the death of Christ which interprets the Holy Scriptures into a consistent and unequivocal meaning. Their language is wholly constructed upon it, and, therefore, can only be interpreted by it ; it is the key to their style, their allusions, their doctrines, their prophecies, their types. All is confused and delusive without it ; all clear, composed, and ordered when placed under its illumination. To Christ under his sacrificial character, as

\* Faber’s *Horæ Mosaicæ*.



well as in his regal claims, "give all the prophets witness ;" and in this testimony all the services of the tabernacle and the rites of the patriarchal age concur. Christ, as "the Lamb" of God, was "slain from the foundation of the world ;" and when the world shall be no more, he will appear before his glorified saints as "the Lamb newly slain," shedding upon them the unabated efficacy of his death for ever. Nor is it a doctrine to be rejected without imminent peril : "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you ;" words which, as Whitby justly observes, "clearly declare the necessity of faith in his body given, and his blood shed, for the remission of sins, in order to justification and salvation."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *Benefits derived to Man from the Atonement : Justification.*

WHEN we speak of benefits received by the human race in consequence of the atonement of Christ, the truth is, that man, having forfeited good of every kind, and even life itself, by his transgression, all that remains to him more than evil in the natural world, and in the dispensations of general and particular providence, as well as all spiritual blessings put within his reach by the Gospel, are to be considered as the fruits of the death and intercession of Christ, and ought to be gratefully acknowledged as such ; we enjoy nothing in our own right, and receive all from the hands of the divine mercy. We now, however, speak in particular of those benefits which immediately relate to, or which constitute, what, in Scripture, is called our “ salvation ; ” by which term is meant the deliverance of man from the penalty, dominion, and pollution of his sins ; his introduction into the divine favour in this life ; and his future and eternal felicity in another.

The grand object of our redemption was to accomplish this salvation ; and the first effect of Christ’s atonement, whether anticipated before his coming,—as “ the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world,”—or when effected by his passion, was to place God and man in that new relation from which salvation might be derived to the offender.

The only relation in which an offended Sovereign and a guilty subject could stand, in mere justice, was the relation of a judge and a criminal capitally convicted. The new relation effected by the death of Christ is, as to God, that of an offended Sovereign having devised honourable means to suspend the execution of the sentence of death, and to offer terms of pardon to the condemned ; and, as to man, that, as the object of this compassion, he receives assurance of the

placableness of God, and his readiness to forgive all his offences, and may, by the use of the prescribed means, actually obtain this favour.

To this is to be added another consideration : God is not merely disposed to forgive the offences of men upon their suit and application ; but an affecting activity is ascribed, in Scripture, to the compassion of God. The atonement of Christ having made it morally practicable to exercise mercy, and having removed all legal obstructions out of the way of reconciliation, that mercy pours itself forth in ardent and ceaseless efforts to accomplish its own purposes ; and, not content with waiting the return of man in penitence and prayer, “ God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself ;” that is to say, he employs various means to awaken men to a due sense of their fallen and endangered condition, and to prompt and influence them (sometimes with mighty efficacy) to seek his favour and grace, in the way which he has himself ordained in his revealed word.

The mixed and chequered external circumstances of men in this present life are a providential arrangement, which is to be attributed to this design ; and, viewed under this aspect, it throws an interesting light upon the condition of mankind, unknown to the wisest among those nations which have not had the benefits of revealed religion, except that some glimpses, in a few cases, may have been afforded of this doctrine by the scattered and broken rays of early tradition. Nor has this been always adverted to by those writers who have enjoyed the full manifestations of divine truth in the Scriptures. By many, the infliction of labour, and sorrow, and disappointment, upon fallen man, and the shortening of the term of human life, are considered, chiefly, if not exclusively, as measures adopted to prevent evil, or of restraining its overflow in society. Such ends are, doubtless, by the wisdom of God, thus effected, to a great and beneficial extent ; but there is a still higher design : These dispensations are not only instruments of prevention, but intended means of salvation, preparatory to, and co-operative with, those agencies by which only that result can be directly produced. The state of man shows that he is

under a chequered dispensation, in which justice and forbearance, mercy and correction, have all their place, and in which there is a marked adaptation to his state as a reprieved criminal ; a being still guilty, but within the reach of hope. The earth is cursed, but it yields its produce to man's toil ; life is prolonged in some instances, and curtailed in others, and is uncertain to all ; we have health and sickness, pleasures and pains, gratifications and disappointment ; but as to all, in circumstances however favoured, dissatisfaction and restlessness of spirit are still felt ; a thirst which nothing earthly can allay, a vacuity which nothing in our outward condition can supply. There is a manifestation of mercy to save, as well as of wisdom to prevent ; and the great end of the whole is explained by the inspired record : " Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to keep back his soul from the pit." His goodness is designed to lead us to repentance ; his rod, to teach us wisdom : " In the day of adversity consider."

Another benefit, granted for the same end, is the revelation of the will of God, and the declaration of his purposes of grace as to man's actual redemption. These purposes have been declared to man, with great inequality, we grant ;—a mystery which we are not able to explain ;—but we have the testimony of God in his own word, though we cannot, in many cases, trace the process of the revelation, that in no case, that in no nation, " has he left himself without witness." Oral revelations were made to the first men ; these became the subject of tradition, and were carried into all nations, though the mercy of God, in this respect, was abused by that wilful corruption of his truth of which all have been guilty. To the Jews he was pleased to give a written record of his will ; and the possession of this, in its perfect evangelical form, has become the distinguished privilege of all Christian nations ; who are now exerting themselves to make the blessing universal ; a result which, probably, is not far distant. By this direct benefit of the atonement of Christ, the law under which we are all placed is exhibited in its full, though reproofing, perfection ; the character of " Him with whom we have to do " is unveiled ; the history of the redeeming acts of our



Saviour is recorded ; his example, his sufferings, his resurrection and intercession, the terms of our pardon, the process of our regeneration, the bright and attractive path of obedience, are all presented to our meditations ; and surmounting the whole is that “immortality which has been brought to light by the Gospel.” Having the revelation, also, in this written form, it is guarded against corruption ; and, by the multiplication of copies in the present day, it has become a book for family reading, and private perusal and study ; so that neither can we, except wilfully, remain ignorant of the important truths it contains, nor can they be long absent from the attention of the most careless ; from so many quarters are they obtruded upon them.

To this great religious advantage we are to add the institution of the Christian ministry, or the appointment of men, who have been themselves reconciled to God, to preach the word of reconciliation to others ; to do this publicly, in opposition to all contempt and persecution, in every place where they may be placed, and to which they can have access ; to study the word of God themselves ; faithfully and affectionately to administer it to persons of all conditions ; and thus, by a constant activity, to keep the light of truth before the eyes of men, and to impress it upon their consciences.

These means are all accompanied with the influence of the Holy Spirit ; for it is the constant doctrine of the Scriptures that men are not left to the mere influence of a revelation of truth, and the means of salvation ; but are graciously excited, and effectually aided in all their endeavours to avail themselves of both. Before the flood the Holy Spirit is represented as “striving” with men, to restrain them from their wickedness, and to lead them to repentance. This, especially, was his benevolent employ, as we learn from St. Peter, during the whole time that the ark was preparing ; the period in which Noah fulfilled his ministry as “preacher of righteousness” to the disobedient world. Under the law the wicked are said to “grieve” and “resist” the Holy Spirit ; and good men are seen earnestly supplicating his help, not only in extraordinary cases, and for some miraculous purpose, but in the ordinary

course of religious experience and conflict. The final establishment and the moral effects flowing from Messiah's dominion are ascribed, by the Prophets, to the pouring out of the Spirit, as rain upon the parched ground, and as the opening of rivers in the desert; and that the agency of the Spirit is not confined, in the New Testament, to gifts and miraculous powers, and their effects in producing mere intellectual conviction of the truth of Christianity, but is directed to the renovation of our nature, and the carrying into full practical effect the redeeming designs of the Gospel, is manifest from numerous passages and arguments to be found in the discourses of Christ, and the writings of his Apostles. In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus he declares that the regenerate man is "born of the Spirit." He promises to send the Spirit "to convince" (or reprove) "the world of sin." It is by the Spirit that our Lord represents himself as carrying on the work of human salvation, after his return to heaven; and, in this sense, promises to abide with his disciples for ever, and to be with them to the end of the world. In accordance with this the Apostles ascribe the success of their preaching, in producing moral changes in the hearts of men, to the influence of the Spirit. So far from assigning this to the extraordinary gifts with which the Spirit had furnished them, St. Paul denies that this efficacy was to be ascribed either to himself or Apollos, though both were thus richly endowed; and he expressly attributes the increase which followed their planting and watering to God. The Spirit is, therefore, represented as giving life to the dead souls of men. The moral virtues are called "fruits of the Spirit;" and to be "led by the Spirit," is made the proof of our being the sons of God.

Such is the wondrous and deeply-affecting doctrine of Scripture. The fruit of the death and intercession of Christ is not only to render it consistent with a righteous government to forgive sin, but to call forth the active exercise of the love of God to man. His "good Spirit," the expressive appellation of the third person of the blessed Trinity in the Old Testament, visits every heart, and connects his secret influences with outward means, to awaken the attention

of man to spiritual and eternal things, and win his heart to God.\*

To this operation, this “working of God in man,” in conjunction with the written and preached word, and other means of religious instruction and excitement, is to be attributed that view of the spiritual nature of the law under which we are placed, and of the extent of its demands, which produces conviction of the fact of sin, and at once annihilates all self-righteousness, and all palliations of offence; which withers the goodly show of supposititious virtues, and brings the convicted transgressor,—whatever his character may be before men, and though, in comparison of many of his fellow-creatures, he may have been much less sinful,—to say before God, “Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?” The penalty of the law, death, eternal death, being at the same time apprehended, and meditated upon, the bondage of fear and the painful anticipations of the consequences of sin follow, and thus he is moved by a sense of danger to look out for a remedy. This being disclosed in the same revelation, and unfolded by the same Spirit, from whose secret influence he has received this unwonted tenderness of heart, this “broken and contrite spirit,” he confesses his sins before God, and appears like the publican in the temple, smiting upon his breast, exclaiming, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”—thus at once acknowledging his own offence and unworthiness, and flying for refuge to the mercy of his offended God proclaimed to him in Christ. That, then, which every such convinced and awakened man needs is mercy, the remission of his sins, and consequent exemption from their penalty. It is only this which can take him from under the malediction of the general law which he has violated; only this which can bring him into a state of reconciliation and friendship with the Lawgiver, whose righteous displeasure he has provoked. This act of mercy is, in the New Testament, called

\* *Illius esse duritiem humani cordis emollire, cum aut per salutiferam prædicationem Evangelii, aut aliâ quâcunque ratione in pectora hominum recipitur: Illum eos illuminare, et in agnitionem Dei atque in omnem viam veritatis et in totius vitæ novitatem, et perpetuam salutis spem perducere.*—



“justification ;” and to the consideration of this doctrine we must now direct our attention.

On the nature of justification, its extent, and the mode in which it is attained, it is not necessary to say, that various opinions have been asserted and defended by theologians ; but before we advert to any of them, our care shall be to adduce the natural and unperturbed doctrine of Scripture on a subject which it is of so much importance clearly to apprehend in that light in which it is there presented.

The first point which we find established by the language of the New Testament is, that “justification,” “the pardon and remission of sins,” “the non-imputation of sin,” and “the imputation of righteousness,” are terms and phrases of the same import. The following passages may be given in proof :—

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.” (Luke xviii. 13, 14.) Here the term “justified” must mean “pardoned,” since the publican confessed himself “a sinner,” and asked “mercy” in that relation.

“Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and, by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) Here, also, it is plain that “forgiveness of sins” and “justification” mean the same thing, one term being used as explanatory of the other.

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii. 25, 26.) “To remit sins” and “to justify” are here also represented as the same act ; consequent upon a declaration of the righteousness of God, and upon our faith.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness ; even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom



God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered ; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. iv. 4—8.) The quotation from David, introduced by the Apostle, by way of illustrating his doctrine of the justification of the ungodly, by "counting his faith for righteousness," shows clearly, that he considered "justification," "the imputing of righteousness," "the forgiveness of iniquities," the "covering of sin," the "non-imputation of sin," as of the same import ; acts substantially equivalent one to another, though under somewhat different views, and therefore expressed by terms respectively convertible :—This variety of phrase being adopted, probably, to preserve the idea which runs throughout the whole Scripture, that, in the remission or pardon of sin, Almighty God acts in his character of Ruler and Judge, showing mercy upon terms satisfactory to his justice, when he might in rigid justice have punished our transgressions to the utmost. The term "justification," especially, is judiciary, and taken from courts of law and the proceedings of Magistrates ; and this judiciary character of the act of pardon is also confirmed by the relation of the parties to each other, as it is constantly exhibited in Scripture. God is an offended Sovereign ; man is an offending subject. He has offended against public law, not against private obligations ; and the act therefore by which he is relieved from the penalty must be magisterial and regal. It is also a further confirmation, that in this process Christ is represented as a public Mediator and Advocate.

The importance of acquiring and maintaining this simple and distinct view of justification, that it is the remission of sins, as stated in the passages above quoted, will appear from the following considerations :—

1. We are taught that pardon of sin is not an act of prerogative, done above law ; but a judicial process, done consistently with law. For in this process there are three parties.—God, as Sovereign : "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ?"—Christ, as Advocate ; not defending the guilty,

but interceding for them : “ It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) “ And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.” (1 John ii. 1.)—The third party is man, who is, by his own confession, “ guilty,” “ a sinner,” “ ungodly ;” for repentance in all cases precedes this remission of sins ; and it both supposes and confesses offence and desert of punishment. God is Judge in this process, not, however, as it has been well expressed, “ by the law of creation and of works, but by the law of redemption and grace. Not as merely just, though just ; but as merciful. Not as merciful in general, and *ex nudâ voluntate*, without any respect had to satisfaction ; but as propitiated by the blood of Christ, and having accepted the propitiation made by his blood. Not merely propitiated by his blood, but moved by his intercession, which he makes as our Advocate in heaven ; not only pleading the propitiation made and accepted, but the repentance and faith of the sinner, and the promise of the Judge, before whom he pleads.”\* Thus as pardon or justification does not take place but upon propitiation, the mediation and intercession of a third party, and on the condition of the part of the guilty, not only of repentance, but of “ faith ” in Christ’s “ blood ;” (which, as before established, means faith in his sacrificial death ; ) it is not an act of mere mercy, or of prerogative, but one which consists with a righteous government, and proceeds on grounds which secure the honours of the divine justice.

2. We are thus taught that justification has respect to particular individuals, and is to be distinguished from “ that gracious constitution of God, by which, for the sake of Jesus Christ, he so far delivers all mankind from the guilt of Adam’s sin, as to place them, notwithstanding their natural connexion with the fallen progenitor of the human race, in a salvable state. Justification is a blessing of a much higher and more perfect character, and is not common to the human race at large, but experienced by a certain description of persons in

\* Lawson’s *Theo-Politica*.

particular.”\* Thus some of our older Divines properly distinguish between *sententia legis* and *sententia judicis*; that is, between legislation and judgment; between the constitution, whatever it may be, under which the sovereign decides, whether it be rigidly just, or softened by mercy, and his decisions in his regal and judicial capacity themselves. Justification is, therefore, a decision under a gracious legislation,—“the law of faith;” but not this legislation itself. “For if it be an act of legislation, it is then only promise; and that looks towards none in particular, but to all to whom the promise is made, in general, and pre-supposeth a condition to be performed. But justification pre-supposeth a particular person, a particular cause, a condition performed, and the performance, as already past, pleaded; and the decision proceeds accordingly.”† Justification becomes, therefore, a subject of personal concern, personal prayer, and personal seeking, and is to be personally experienced; nor can any one be safe in trusting to that general gracious constitution under which he is placed by the mercy of God in Christ, since that is established in order to the personal and particular justification of those who believe, but must not be confounded with it.

3. Justification being a sentence of pardon, the Antinomian notion of eternal justification becomes a manifest absurdity. For if it be a sentence, a decision on the case of the offender, it must take place in time; for that is not a sentence which is conceived in the breast of the Judge. A sentence is pronounced; and a sentence pronounced and declared from eternity, before man was created, when no sin had been committed, no law published, no Saviour promised, no faith exercised, when, in a word, no being existed but God himself, is not only absurd, but impossible; for it would have been a decision declared to none, and therefore not declared at all: And if, as it is said, the sentence was passed in eternity, but manifested in time, it might from thence be as rightly argued that the world was created from eternity, and that the work

\* Bunting's Sermon on Justification.

† Lawson's *Theo-Politica*.

of creation in the beginning of time was only a manifestation of that which was from everlasting. It is the guilty who are pardoned: "He justifieth the ungodly;" guilt, therefore, precedes pardon; whilst that remains, so far are any from being justified, that they are "under wrath," in a state of condemnation, with which a state of justification cannot consist, for the contradiction is palpable; so that the advocates of this wild notion must either give up justification in eternity, or a state of condemnation in time. If they hold the former, they contradict common sense; if they deny the latter, they deny the Scriptures.

4. Justification being the pardon of sin, this view of the doctrine guards us against the notion that it is an act of God by which we are made actually just and righteous: "This is sanctification, which is, indeed, the immediate fruit of justification; but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies what God does for us, through his Son; the other, what God works in us, by his Spirit. So that, although some rare instances may be found wherein the terms 'justified' and 'justification' are used in so wide a sense as to include sanctification also, yet, in general use, they are sufficiently distinguished from each other, both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers."\*

5. Justification being the pardon of sin by judicial sentence of the offended Majesty of Heaven, under a gracious constitution, the term affords no ground for the notion that it imports the imputation or accounting to us the active and passive righteousness of Christ, so as to make us both relatively and positively righteous.

On this subject, which has been fruitful of controversy, our remarks must be somewhat more extended.

The notion that justification includes not only the pardon of sin, but the imputation to us of Christ's active personal righteousness, though usually held only by Calvinists, has not been received by all Divines of this class; but, on the contrary, by some of them, both in ancient and modern times, it

\* Wesley's Sermons.



has been very strenuously opposed, as well as by the advocates of that more moderate scheme of election defended by Camero in France, and by Baxter in England. Even Calvin himself has said nothing on this subject but which Arminius, in his Declaration before the States of Holland, declares his readiness to subscribe to ; and Mr. Wesley, in much the same view of the subject as Arminius, admits the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us upon our believing, provided it be soberly interpreted.

There are, in fact, three opinions on this subject, which it is necessary to distinguish, in order to obtain clear views of the controversy.

1. The first is a part of the high Calvinistic scheme, and lies at the foundation of Antinomianism, and is, in consequence, violently advocated by those who adopt that gross corruption of Christian faith. It is, that Christ so represented the elect, that his righteousness is imputed to us as ours ; as if we ourselves had been what he was, that is, perfectly obedient to the law of God, and had done what he did as perfectly righteous.

The first objection to this opinion is, that it is nowhere stated in Scripture that Christ's personal righteousness is imputed to us. Not a text can be found which contains any enunciation of this doctrine ; and those which are adduced,—such as “the Lord our righteousness,” and “Christ, who is made unto us righteousness,”—are obviously pressed into the service of this scheme by a paraphrastic interpretation, for which there is no authority in any other passages which speak of our redemption. But to these texts we shall return in the sequel.

2. The notion here attached to Christ's representing us is wholly gratuitous. In a limited sense it is true that Christ represented us ; that is, suffered in our stead, that we might not suffer, “but not absolutely as our delegate,” says Baxter justly ; “our persons did not, in a law sense, do in and by Christ what he did, or possess the habits which he possessed, or suffer what he suffered ;”\* the Scripture doctrine is, indeed,

\* Gospel Defended.

just the contrary. It is never said that we suffered in Christ, but that he suffered for us ; so, also, it is never taught that we obeyed in Christ, but that, through his entire obedience to a course of subjection and suffering, ending in his death, our disobedience is forgiven.

3. Nor is there any weight in the argument that, as our sins were accounted his, so his righteousness is accounted ours. Our sins were never so accounted Christ's as that he did them, and so justly suffered for them. This is a monstrous notion, which has been sometimes pushed to the verge of blasphemy. Our transgressions are never said to have been imputed to him in the fact, but only that they were laid upon him in the penalty. To be God's beloved Son, in whom he was always well pleased, and to be reckoned, imputed, accounted a sinner, *de facto*, are manifest contradictions.

4. This whole doctrine of the imputation of Christ's personal moral obedience to believers as their own personal moral obedience, involves a fiction and impossibility inconsistent with the divine attributes. "The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth ; neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more confound me with Christ than with David or Abraham."\* But a contradiction is involved in another view : If what our Lord was and did is to be accounted to us in the sense just given, then we must be accounted never to have sinned, because Christ never sinned ; and yet we must ask for pardon, though we are accounted, from birth to death, to have fulfilled God's law in Christ ; or if they should say that when we ask for pardon we ask only for a revelation to us of our eternal justification or pardon, the matter is not altered ; for what need is there of pardon, in time or eternity, if we are accounted to have perfectly obeyed God's holy law ? And why should we be accounted also to have suffered, in Christ, the penalty of sins which we are accounted never to have committed ?

5. Another objection to the accounting of Christ's personal

\* Wesley.

acts as done by us is, that they were of a loftier character than can be supposed capable of being accounted the acts of mere creatures ; that, in one eminent instance, neither the act could be required of us, nor the imputation of the act made to us ; and that, in other respects, and as to particular duties, Christ's personal obedience is deficient, and cannot be, therefore, reckoned to our account. For the first, Christ was God and man united in one person, a circumstance which gave a peculiar character of fulness and perfection to his obedience, which not even man in his state of innocence can be supposed capable of rendering. "He, then, that assumeth this righteousness to himself," says Goodwin, "and apparelleth himself with it, represents himself before God, not in the habit of a just or righteous man, but in the glorious attire of the great Mediator of the world, whose righteousness hath heights and depths in it, a length and breadth, which infinitely exceed the proportions of all men whatever. Now, then, for a silly worm to take this robe of immeasurable majesty upon him, and to conceit himself as great in holiness and righteousness as Jesus Christ, (for that is the spirit that rules in this opinion, to teach men to assume all that Christ did unto themselves, and that in no other way, nor upon any lower terms, than as if themselves had personally done it,) whether this be right I leave to sober men to consider."\* For the second, I refer to our Lord's baptism by John. His submission to this ordinance was a part of his personal righteousness, and it is strongly marked as such in his own words addressed to John : "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." But no man now is bound to submit to the baptism of John ; and the righteousness of doing so, whether personally or by imputation, is superfluous. This may also be applied to many other of the acts of Christ ; they were never obligatory upon us, and their imputation to us is impossible or unnecessary. For the third case, the personal obedience of Christ is, as to particular acts, deficient ; and our condition could not, therefore, be provided for by this imputation.

\* Treatise on Justification.

Suppose us guilty of violating the paternal or the conjugal duties, the duties of servants, or of Magistrates, with many others; this theory is, that we are justified by the imputation of Christ's personal acts of righteousness to us, and that they are reckoned to us, as though we had ourselves performed them. But our Lord never having stood in any of these relations, never acquired a personal righteousness of this kind to be reckoned as done by us. That which never was done by Christ cannot be imputed; and so it would follow that we can never be forgiven such delinquencies. If it be said that the imputation of particular acts is not necessary, but that it is sufficient if men have a righteousness imputed to them which is equivalent to them, it is answered, The strict and peremptory nature of law knows nothing of this doctrine of the equivalency of one act to another. The suffering of an unobliged substitute, where such a provision is admitted, may be an equivalent to the suffering of the offender; but one course of duties cannot be accepted in the place of another when justification is placed on the ground of the actual fulfilment of the law by a delegate, in the place of the delinquent, which is the ground on which the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness for justification places it. The law must exact conformity to all its precepts in their place and order, and he that "offends in one is guilty of all."

6. A crowning and most fatal objection is, that this doctrine shifts the meritorious cause of man's justification from Christ's "obedience unto death," where the Scriptures place it, to Christ's active obedience to the precepts of the law; and leaves no rational account of the ground of Christ's vicarious sufferings. To his "blood" the New Testament writers ascribe our redemption; and faith in his blood" is as clearly held out as the instrumental cause of our justification; but by this doctrine the attention and hope of men are perversely turned away from his sacrificial death to his holy life, which, though necessary, both as an example to us, and also to qualify his sacrifice, so that his blood should be that of "a Lamb without spot," is nowhere represented as that on account of which men are pardoned.



Piscator, though a Calvinist, thus treats the subject in scholastic form: "If our sins have been expiated by the obedience of the life of Christ, either a perfect expiation has been thus made for all of them, or an imperfect one for some of them. The first cannot be asserted; for then it would follow that Christ had died in vain; for as he died to expiate our sins, he would not have accounted it necessary to offer such an expiation for them, if they had already been expiated by the obedience of his life. And the latter cannot be maintained, because Christ has yielded perfect obedience to the law of God; wherefore, if he have performed that for the expiation of our sins, he must necessarily, through that obedience, have expiated all of them perfectly." Again: "If Christ, by the obedience of his life had rendered satisfaction to God for our sins, it would follow, as a consequence, that God is unjust, who has made an additional demand to receive satisfaction through the obedience of death, and thus required to have the same debt paid twice." Again: "If Christ, by his obedience to the law, has merited for us the forgiveness of sins, the consequence will be, that the remission of sins was effected without the shedding of blood; but without shedding of blood no remission is effected, as appears from Heb. ix. 22; therefore Christ has not merited for us the remission of sins by the obedience which he performed to the law."\* To the same effect, also, is a passage in Goodwin's *Treatise on Justification*, written whilst he was yet a Calvinist: "If men be as righteous as Christ was in his life, there was no more necessity of his death for them, than there was either of his own death, or the death of any other, for himself. If we were perfectly just or righteous in him, or with him, in his life, then the just would not have died for the unjust, but he would have died for the just, for whom there was no necessity he should die. This reason the Apostle expressly delivers, Gal. ii. 21: 'If righteousness be by the law, then Christ died in vain.' I desire the impartial reader to observe narrowly the force of this inference made by the Holy Ghost. If righteousness, or justi-

\* See note in Nichols's Translation of the Works of Arminius, vol. i., p. 634.

fication, be by the law, then Christ died in vain. Men cannot here betake themselves to their wonted refuge, to say, that by the law is to be understood the works of the law as performed by man's self in person. For if by the word 'law,' in this place, we understand the works of the law as performed by Christ, the consequence will rise up with the greater strength against them. If righteousness were by the works of the law, as performed by Christ, that is, if the imputation of them were our complete righteousness, the death of Christ for us had been in vain, because the righteousness of his life imputed had been a sufficient and complete righteousness for us."

The same writer also powerfully argues against the same doctrine, from its confounding the two covenants of works and grace: "It is true, many that hold the way of imputation are nothing ashamed of this consequent,—the confounding the two covenants of God with men, that of works with that of grace. These conceive that God never made more covenants than one with man; and that the Gospel is nothing else but a gracious aid from God to help man to perform the covenant of works: So that the life and salvation which are said to come by Christ, in no other sense come by him but as he fulfilled that law of works for man which men themselves were not able to fulfil: And by imputation, as by a deed of gift, he makes over his perfect obedience and fulfilling of the law to those that believe; so that they, in right of this perfect obedience, made theirs by imputation, come to inherit life and salvation, according to the strict tenor of the covenant of works,—'Do this and live.'

"But men may as well say, there was no Second Adam, really differing from the first; or that the spirit of bondage is the same with the Spirit of Adoption. If the second covenant of grace were implicitly contained in the first, then the meaning of the first covenant, conceived in those words, 'Do this and live,' must be, 'Do this, either by thyself, or by another, and live.' There is no other way to reduce them to the same covenant.

"Again: If the first and second covenant were in substance

the same, then must the conditions in both be the same. For the conditions in a covenant are as essential a part of it as any other belonging to it. Though there be the same parties covenanting, and the same things covenanted for; yet if there be new articles of agreement, it is really another covenant. Now, if the conditions be the same in both those covenants, then to 'do this,' and to 'believe,' faith and works, are the same; whereas the Scripture, from place to place, makes the most irreconcilable opposition between them. But some, being shy of this consequence, hold the imputation of Christ's righteousness, (in the sense opposed,) and yet demur upon an identity of the two covenants. Wherefore, to prove it, I thus reason: Where the parties covenanting are the same, and the things covenanted for the same, and the conditions the same, there the covenants are the same. But if the righteousness of the law imputed to us be the condition of the new covenant, all the three, persons, things, conditions, are the same. Therefore the two covenants, first and second, the old and the new, are the same; because as to the parties covenanting, and the things covenanted for, it is agreed on both sides, they are the same.

“ If it be objected, that the righteousness of the law imputed from another, and wrought by a man's self, are two different conditions; and that, therefore, it doth not follow, that the covenants are the same: To this I answer, The substance of the agreement will be found the same notwithstanding; the works or righteousness of the law are the same, by whomsoever wrought. If Adam had fulfilled the law, as Christ did, he had been justified by the same righteousness wherewith Christ himself was righteous. If it be said, that imputation in the second covenant, which was not in the first, makes a difference in the condition; I answer, 1. Imputation of works, or of righteousness, is not the condition of the new covenant, but believing. If imputation were the condition, then the whole covenant would lie upon God, and nothing be required on the creature's part; for imputation is an act of God, not of men. 2. If it were granted, that the righteousness, or the works of the law imputed from Christ, were that



whereby we are justified, yet they must justify, not as imputed, but as righteousness, or works of the law. Therefore, imputation makes no difference in this respect. Imputation can be no part of that righteousness by which we are justified, because it is no conformity with any law, nor with any part or branch of any law, that man was ever bound to keep. Therefore, it can be no part of that righteousness by which he is justified. So that the condition of both covenants will be found the same, (and consequently both covenants the same,) if justification be maintained by the righteousness of Christ imputed."

To the work last quoted the reader may be referred as a complete treatise on the subject, and a most masterly refutation of a notion, which he and other Calvinistic Divines, in different ages, could not fail to perceive was most delusive to the souls of men, directly destructive of moral obedience, and not less so of the Christian doctrine of the atonement of Christ, and justification by "faith in his blood." It is on this ground that men who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, contend that being invested with the perfect righteousness of Christ, God cannot see any sin in them; and, indeed, upon their own principles they reason conclusively. Justice has not to do with them, but with Christ; it demands perfect obedience, and Christ has rendered that perfect obedience for them, and what he did is always accounted as done by them. They are, therefore, under no real obligation of obedience; they can fear no penal consequences from disobedience; and a course of the most flagrant vice may consist with an entire confidence in the indefeisible favour of God, with the profession of sonship and discipleship, and the hope of heaven. These notions many shamelessly avow; and they have been too much encouraged in their fatal creed, by those who have held the same system in substance, although they abhor the bold conclusions which the open Antinomian would draw from it.

The doctrine on which the above remarks have been made, is the first of the three opinions which have been held on the subject of the imputation of righteousness in our



justification. The second is the opinion of Calvin himself, and those of his followers who have not refined so much upon the scheme of their master as others. With them many Arminians have also, in some respects, agreed; not that they have approved the terms in which this opinion is usually expressed; but because they have thought it, under a certain interpretation, right, and one which would allow them, for the sake of peace, to use either the phrase, "the imputation of the righteousness of Christ," or "the imputation of faith for righteousness," which latter they consider more scriptural, and therefore interpret the former so as to be consistent with it.

The sentiments of Calvin on this subject may be collected from the following passages in the third book of his "Institutes:"—

"We simply explain justification to be an acceptance, by which God receives us into his favour and esteems us as righteous persons; and we say it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ." "He must certainly be destitute of a righteousness of his own, who is taught to seek it out of himself. This is most clearly asserted by the Apostle when he says, 'He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' We see that our righteousness is not in ourselves, but in Christ. 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' What is placing our righteousness in the obedience of Christ, but asserting that we are accounted righteous only because his obedience is accepted for us as if it were our own?"

In these passages, the wording of which seems at first sight to favour the opinion above refuted, there is, however, this marked difference, that there is no separation made between the active and passive righteousness of Christ; his obedience to the precepts of the moral law, and his obedience to its penalty; so that one is imputed in our justification for one purpose, and the other for another; one to take the place of our obligation to obey, the other of our obligation to suffer;

but the obedience of Christ is considered as one, as his holy life and sacrificial death considered together, and forming that righteousness of Christ which, being imputed to us, we are "reputed righteous before God, and not of ourselves." This is further confirmed by the strenuous manner in which Calvin proves that justification is simply the remission or non-imputation of sin: "Whom, therefore, the Lord receives into fellowship with him, him he is said to justify, because he cannot receive any one into fellowship with himself without making him from a sinner to be a righteous person. This is accomplished by the remission of sins. For if they whom the Lord hath reconciled to himself be judged according to their works, they will still be found actually sinners, who, notwithstanding, must be absolved and free from sin. It appears, then, that those whom God receives are made righteous no otherwise than as they are purified by being cleansed from all their defilements by the remission of sins; so that such a righteousness may, in one word, be denominated a remission of sins. Both these points are fully established by the language of Paul, which I have already cited: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.' Then he adds, 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' The terms 'righteousness' and 'reconciliation' are here used by St. Paul indiscriminately, to teach us that they are mutually comprehended in each other. And he states the manner of obtaining this righteousness to consist in our transgressions not being imputed to us; wherefore we can no longer doubt how God justifies, when we hear that he reconciles us to himself by not imputing our sins to us." "So Paul, in preaching at Antioch, says, 'Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified.' The Apostle thus connects 'forgiveness of sins,' with 'justification,' to show that they are identically the same."\*

\* Institutes, lib. 3, cap. xi.

This simple notion of justification as the remission of sins could not have been maintained by Calvin, had he held the notion of a distinct imputation of Christ's active righteousness; for it has always followed from that notion, that they who have held it represent justification as consisting of two parts, first, the forgiveness of sins, and then the imputation of Christ's moral obedience, so that he who is forgiven may be considered personally righteous, and thus, when both meet, he is justified.\*

The view taken by Calvin of the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification, is obviously, that the righteousness of Christ, that is, his entire obedience to the will of his Father both in doing and suffering, is, as he says, "accepted for us, as though it were our own;" so that, in virtue of it, upon our believing we are accounted righteous, not personally, but by the remission or non-imputation of our sins. Thus, he observes on Acts xiii. 38, 39, "The justification which we have by Christ in the Gospel, is not a justification with righteousness, properly so called, but a justification from sin, and from the guilt of sin and condemnation due to it. So when Christ said to men and women in the Gospel, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' then he justified them,—the forgiveness of their sins was their justification."

Calvin, however, like many of his followers who adopt his views on this subject, uses figurative terms and phrases which somewhat obscure his real meaning, and give much countenance to the Antinomian doctrine; but then, so little, it has been thought, can be objected to the opinion of Calvin, in the article of imputed righteousness, in the main, that many Divines, opposed to the Calvinian theory generally, have not hesitated, in substance, to assent to it, reserving to themselves some liberty in the use of the terms in which it is often enveloped, either to modify, explain, or reject them.

Thus Arminius: "I believe that sinners are accounted righteous solely by the obedience of Christ; and that the

\* To be released from the damnatory sentence is one thing; to be treated as a righteous person, is evidently another.—HERVEY'S *Theron and Aspasio*.

righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause on account of which God pardons the sins of believers, and reckons them as righteous as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law. But since God imputes the righteousness of Christ to none except believers, I conclude that, in this sense, it may be well and properly said, to a man who believes, faith is imputed for righteousness, through grace, because God hath set forth his Son Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood. Whatever interpretation may be put upon these expressions, none of our Divines blame Calvin, or consider him to be heterodox on this point; yet my opinion is not so widely different from his as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes.\*

So also Mr. Wesley, in his sermon entitled "The Lord our Righteousness," almost repeats Arminius's words; but though these eminent Divines seem to agree substantially with Calvin, it is clear that, in their interpretation of the phrase the "imputed righteousness of Christ," he would not entirely agree with them. "As the active and passive righteousness of Christ were never, in fact, separated from each other, so we never need separate them at all. It is with regard to both these conjointly that Jesus is called 'the Lord our righteousness.' But when is this righteousness imputed? When they believe; in that very hour the righteousness of Christ is theirs; it is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes. But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers? In this: All believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of any thing in them, or of any thing that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. But perhaps some will affirm, that faith is imputed to us for righteousness. St. Paul affirms this, therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer, namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ; but this is exactly the

\* Nichols's Works of Arminius, vol. i., p. 636.



same thing which has been said before ; for by that expression I mean neither more nor less than that we are justified by faith, not by works ; or that every believer is forgiven and accepted merely for the sake of what Christ had done and suffered." \*

In this sermon, which is one of peace, one in which he shows how near he was willing to approach those who held the doctrine of Calvin on this subject, the author justly observes, that the terms themselves, in which it is often expressed, are liable to abuse, and intimates that they had better be dispensed with. This every one must feel ; for it is clear that such figurative expressions as "being clothed with the righteousness of Christ," and "appearing before God as invested in it, so that no fault can be laid to our charge," are modes of speech which, though used by Calvin and his followers of the moderate school, and by some evangelical Arminians who mainly agree with them on the subject of man's justification, are much more appropriate to the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness, as held by the higher Calvinists and by Antinomians, than to any other. The truth of the case is, that the imputation of Christ's righteousness is held by such Calvinists in a proper sense ; by evangelical Arminians, in an improper or accommodated sense ; and that Calvin and his real followers, though nearer to the latter than the former, do not fully agree with either. If the same phrases, therefore, be used, they are certainly understood in different senses, or, by one party at least, with limitations. And if it can be shown that neither is the "imputation of Christ's righteousness" in any good sense expressed nor implied in Scripture, and that the phrases "being clothed," and "invested with his righteousness," are not used with reference to justification, it seems preferable, at least when we are investigating truth, to discard them at once, and fully to bring out the testimony of Scripture on the doctrine of imputation.

The question, then, will be, not whether the imputation of Christ's righteousness is to be taken in the sense of the Anti-

nomians, which has been sufficiently refuted ; but whether there is any Scripture authority for the imputation of Christ's righteousness as it is understood by Calvin, and admitted, though with some hesitancy, and with explanations, by Arminius and some others.

With Calvin the notion of imputation seems to be, that the righteousness of Christ, that is, his entire obedience to the will of his Father, both in doing and suffering, is, upon our believing, imputed or accounted to us, or accepted for us, "as though it were our own." From which we may conclude that he admitted some kind of transfer of the righteousness of Christ to our account ; and that believers are considered so to be in Christ, as that he should answer for them in law, and plead his righteousness in default of theirs. All this, we grant, is capable of being interpreted to a good and scriptural sense ; but it is also capable of a contrary one. The opinion of some professedly Calvinistic Divines, of Baxter and his followers, and of the majority of evangelical Arminians is, as Baxter well expresses it, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us in the sense "of its being accounted of God the valuable consideration, satisfaction, and merit, (attaining God's ends,) for which we are (when we consent to the covenant of grace) forgiven and justified, against the condemning sentence of the law of innocency, and accounted and accepted of God to grace and glory."\* So also Goodwin : "If we take the phrase of imputing Christ's righteousness improperly, namely, for the bestowing, as it were, of the righteousness of Christ, including his obedience, as well passive as active, in the return of it, that is, in the privileges, blessings, and benefits purchased by it, so a believer may be said to be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed. But then the meaning can be no more than this, God justifies a believer for the sake of Christ's righteousness, and not for any righteousness of his own. Such an imputation of the righteousness of Christ as this is no way denied or questioned."†

Between the two opinions as to the imputation of the righ-

\* Breviate of Controversies.

† On Justification.

teousness of Christ, it will be seen that there is a manifest difference, which difference arises from the different senses in which the term "imputation" is taken. The latter takes it in the sense of accounting or allowing to the believer the benefit of the righteousness of Christ, the other in the sense of reckoning or accounting the righteousness of Christ as ours, that is, what was done and suffered by him is regarded as done and suffered by us. "It is accepted," says Calvin, "as though it were our own;" so that though Calvin does not divide the active and passive obedience of Christ, nor make justification any thing more than the remission of sin, yet his opinion easily slides into the Antinomian notion, and lays itself open to several of the same objections, and especially to this, that it involves the same kind of fiction, that what Christ did or suffered is, in any sense whatever, considered by Him who knows all things as they are, as being done or suffered by any other person than by him who did or suffered it in fact.

For this notion,—that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed as to be accounted our own,—there is no warrant in the word of God; and a slight examination of those passages which are indifferently adduced to support either the Antinomian or the Calvinistic view of the subject, will suffice to demonstrate this.

"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Psalm xxxii. 1.) The covering of sin here spoken of is, by some, considered to be the investment of the sinner with the righteousness or obedience of Christ. But this is entirely gratuitous; for the forgiveness of sin, even by the legal atonements, is called, according to the Hebrew idiom, (though another verb is used,) "to cover" sin; and the latter part of the sentence is clearly a parallelism to the former. This is the interpretation of Luther and of Calvin himself. "To forgive sin," "to cover sin," and "not to impute sin," are, in this psalm, all phrases obviously of the same import, and no other kind of imputation but the non-imputation of sin is mentioned in it. And, indeed, the passage will not serve the purpose of the advocates of the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness on their own



principles; for sin cannot be covered by the imputation of Christ's active righteousness, since they hold that it is taken away by the imputation of his death; and that the office of Christ's active righteousness is, not to take away sin, but to render us personally and positively holy by imputation, and the fiction of a transfer.

"And this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. xxiii. 6; and xxxiii. 16.) This passage, also, proves nothing to the point, for it is neither said that the righteousness of the Lord shall be our righteousness, nor that it shall be imputed to us for righteousness; but, simply, that the name by which he shall be called, or acknowledged, shall be "the Lord our Righteousness;" that is, the Author and Procurer of our righteousness or justification before God. So he is said to be "the Resurrection," "our Life," "our Peace," &c., as the Author of these blessings; for who ever dreamt that Christ is "the Life," "the Resurrection," "the Peace" of his people by imputation? or that we live by being accounted to live in him? or are raised from the dead by being accounted to have risen in him?

"Some," says Goodwin, "have digged for the treasure of imputation in Isaiah xlv. 24: 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' But, first, neither is there here the least breathing of that imputation so much wondered after; nor do I find any intimation given of any such business by any sound expositor. Secondly. The plain and direct meaning of the place is, that when God should communicate the knowledge of himself, in his Son, to the world, his people should have this sense of the means of their salvation and peace,—that they receive them of the free grace of God, and not of themselves, or by the merit of their own righteousness. And Calvin's exposition is to this effect: 'Because righteousness and strength are the two main points of our salvation, the faithful acknowledge God to be the Author of both.'"

With respect to all those passages which speak of the Jewish or Christian Churches, or their individual members, being "clothed with garments of salvation," "robes of righteous-



ness," "white linen, the righteousness of the saints," or of "putting on Christ;" a class of texts on which, from their mere sound, the advocates of imputed righteousness ring so many changes, the use which is thus made of them shows either great inattention to the context, or great ignorance of the principles of criticism: The former, because the context will show that either those passages relate to temporal deliverances and external blessings, or else, not to justification, but to habitual and practical sanctification, and to the honours and rewards of the saints in glory: The latter, because nothing is more common in language than to represent good or evil habits by clean or filthy, by soiled or resplendent vestments, by nakedness or by clothing; and this is especially the case in the Hebrew language, because it was the custom of the Jews, by changing their garments, to express the changes in their condition: They put on sackcloth, or laid aside their upper robe, (which is, in Scripture style, called making themselves naked,) or rent their garments, when personal or national afflictions came upon them; and they arrayed themselves in white and adorned apparel in seasons of festivity, and after great deliverances. In all these figurative expressions there is, however, nothing which countenances the notion that Christ's righteousness is a robe thrown upon sinful men, to hide from the eye of justice their natural squalidness and pollution, and to give them confidence in the presence of God. No interpretation can be more fanciful and unfounded.

"But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ." (Romans iii. 21, 22.) The righteousness of God here is, by some, taken to signify the righteousness of Christ imputed to them that believe; but the very text makes it evident that, by "the righteousness of God," the righteousness of the Father is meant, for he is distinguished from Jesus Christ, mentioned immediately afterwards; and, by "the righteousness of God," it is also plain that his rectoral justice, in the administration of pardon, is meant; which, of course, is not thought capable of imputation. This is made indubitable by

the verse which follows : " To declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus."

The phrase " the righteousness of God," in this and several other passages in St. Paul's writings, obviously means God's righteous method of justifying sinners through the atonement of Christ, and, instrumentally, by faith. This is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel scheme, the fulness at once of its love and its wisdom, that " the righteousness of God is manifested without law ;" and that, without either an enforcement of the penalty of the violated law upon the personal offender, (which would have cut him off from hope,) or without making his justification to depend upon works of obedience to the law, (which was the only method of justification admitted by the Jews of St. Paul's day,) and which obedience was impossible, and therefore hopeless, he can yet, in perfect consistency with his justice and righteous administration, offer pardon to the guilty. No wonder, therefore, that the Apostle, who discourses professedly on this subject, should lay so great a stress upon it, and that his mind, always full of a subject so great and glorious, should so often advert to it incidentally, as well as in his regular discourses on the justification of man in the sight of God. Thus he gives it as a reason why he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, that " therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith ; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans i. 17.) Thus, again, in contrasting God's method of justifying the ungodly with the error of the Jews, by whom justification was held to be the acquittal of the righteous or obedient, he says, " For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." (Romans x. 3.) The same contrast we have in Phil. iii. 9 : " Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." In all these passages " the righteousness of God " manifestly signifies his righteous method of justifying them that believe in Christ. No reference at all is made to the

imputation of Christ's righteousness to such persons, and much less is any distinction set up between his active and passive righteousness.

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) Here, also, to say that Christ is “made unto us righteousness” by imputation, is to invent, and not to interpret. This is clear, that he is made unto us righteousness only as he is made unto us redemption; so that if we are not redeemed by imputation, we are not justified by imputation. The meaning of the Apostle is, that Christ is made to us, by the appointment of God, the sole means of instruction, justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. v. 21.) “To be made sin,” we have already shown, signifies to be made an offering for sin; consequently, as no imputation of our sins to Christ is here mentioned, there is no foundation for the notion that there is a reciprocal imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. The text is wholly silent on this subject; for it is wholly gratuitous to say that we are made the righteousness of God in or through Christ by imputation, or reckoning to us what he did or suffered as our acts or sufferings. The passages we have already adduced will explain the phrase “the righteousness of God,” in this place. This righteousness, with respect to our pardon, is God's righteous method of justifying, through the atonement of Christ; and our being made or becoming this righteousness of God in or by Christ, is our becoming righteous persons through the pardon of our sins in this peculiar method,—by renouncing our own righteousness, and by submitting to this righteousness of God.

“As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Rom. v. 18, 19.) That this passage, though generally depended upon



in this controversy, as the most decisive in its evidence in favour of the doctrine of imputation, proves nothing to the purpose, may be thus demonstrated: It proves nothing in favour of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness. For,

1. Here is nothing said of the active obedience of Christ, as distinguished from his obedient suffering, to lead us to attribute the free gift of justification to the former, rather than to the latter.

2. If the Apostle be supposed to speak here of the active obedience of Christ, as distinguished from his sufferings, his death is of course excluded from the work of justification. But this cannot be allowed, because the Apostle has intimated, in the same chapter, that we are "justified by his blood." (Rom. v. 9.)

3. As the Apostle has unequivocally decided, that we are justified by the death of Christ, or, in other words, "that we are justified through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation, through faith in his blood," (a thing which the doctrine under examination supposes to be impossible,) there is reason to conclude that he speaks here rather of his passive, than of his active, obedience. "If, indeed, his willingness to suffer for our sins were never spoken of as an act of obedience, such an observation might have the appearance of a mere expedient to get rid of a difficulty. But if, on the other hand, this should prove to be the very spirit and letter of Scripture, the justness of it will be obvious. Hear, then, our Lord himself on this subject: 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.' (John x. 17, 18.) This, then, was the commandment to which he rendered willing obedience, when he said, 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.' (Matt. xxvi. 42.) 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' (John xviii. 11.) In conformity with this, the Apostle



applies to him the following words: 'Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.' Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. By' (his performance of) 'which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' (Heb. x. 5, 10.) 'Being found in fashion as a man,' (says St. Paul,) 'he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' (Phil. ii. 8.) Such was his obedience, 'an obedience unto the death of the cross.' And by this his obedience unto the death of the cross, shall many be constituted righteous, or be justified. Where, then, is the imputation of his active obedience for justification?"\*

It proves nothing in favour of the imputation of Christ's righteousness considered as including both what he did and suffered, in the sense of its being reputed our righteousness, by transfer or by fiction of law. For though the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity is supposed to be taught in this chapter, and the imputation of Christ's obedience, in one or other of the senses above given, is argued from this particular text, the examination of the subject will show that the right understanding of the imputation of Adam's sin wholly overthrows both the Antinomian and Calvinistic view of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. This argument is very ably developed by Goodwin:†

"Because the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity is frequently produced to prove the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I shall lay down, with as much plainness as I can, in what sense the Scriptures countenance that imputation. The Scriptures own no other imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, than of Christ's righteousness to those that believe. The righteousness of Christ is imputed or given to those that believe, not in the letter and formality of it, but in blessings, privileges, and benefits, purchased of God by the merit of it. So the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, not in the letter and formality of it, (which is the imputation commonly

\* Hare On Justification.

† Treatise on Justification.

urged,) but in the demerit of it, that is, in the curse or punishment due to it. Therefore, as concerning this imputation of Adam's sin, I answer,

“First. The Scripture nowhere affirms, either the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, or of the righteousness of Christ to those that believe; neither is such a manner of speaking any ways agreeable to the language of the Holy Ghost: For, in the Scriptures, wheresoever the term ‘imputing’ is used, it is only applied to or spoken of something of the same persons, to whom the imputation is said to be made, and never, to my remembrance, to or of any thing of another's. So, Rom. iv. 3, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness,’ that is, his own believing was imputed to him, not another man's. So, verse 5, but ‘to him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is imputed to him for righteousness.’ So, Psalm cvi. 30, 31, ‘Phinehas stood up and executed judgment, and that’ (act of his) ‘was imputed to him for righteousness,’ that is, received a testimony from God of being a righteous act. So again, 2 Cor. v. 19, ‘Not imputing their trespasses’ (their own trespasses) ‘unto them.’

“Secondly. When a thing is said simply to be imputed, as sin, folly, and so righteousness, the phrase is not to be taken concerning the bare acts of the things, as if (for example) ‘to impute sin to a man’ signified this, to repute the man (to whom sin is imputed) to have committed a sinful act, or, as if ‘to impute folly’ were simply to charge a man to have done foolishly: But when it is applied to things that are evil, and attributed to persons that have power over those to whom the imputation is made, it signifieth the charging the guilt of what is imputed upon the head of the person to whom the imputation is made, with an intent of inflicting some condign punishment upon him. So that ‘to impute sin,’ in Scripture phrase, is to charge the guilt of sin upon a man with a purpose to punish him for it. Thus, sin is said ‘not to be imputed where there is no law.’ (Rom. v. 13.) The meaning cannot be, that the act which a man doeth, whether there be a law or no law, should not be imputed to him. The law doth not make any act to be imputed or ascribed to a man, which might not as

well have been imputed without it. But the meaning is, that there is no guilt charged by God upon men, nor any punishment inflicted for any thing done by them, but only by virtue of the law prohibiting. In which respect the law is said to be ‘the strength of sin,’ because it gives a condemning power against the doer, to that which otherwise would have had none. (1 Cor. xv. 56.) So again, when it is said, ‘God doth not lay folly to the charge of them,’ (that is, impute folly to them,) ‘that make the souls of the slain to cry out,’ (Job xxiv. 12,) the meaning is, not that God doth not repute them to have committed the acts of oppression, or murder; (for, supposing they did such things, it is impossible but God should repute them to have done them;) but that God doth not visibly charge the guilt of these sins upon them, or inflict punishment for them. So, when Shimei prayeth David not to impute wickedness unto him, his meaning is, not to desire David not to think he had done wickedly in railing upon him, (for himself confesseth this in the very next words,) but not to inflict the punishment which that wickedness deserved. (2 Sam. xix. 19.) So when David himself pronounceth the man ‘blessed to whom the Lord imputeth not sin,’ his meaning is, not that there is any man, whom the Lord would not repute to have committed those acts of sin which he has committed; but that such are blessed on whom God will not charge the demerit of their sins in the punishment due to them. So yet again, (to forbear further citations,) when God is said, ‘not to impute their sins unto men,’ (2 Cor. v. 19,) the meaning is, not that God should not repute men to have committed such and such sins against him; but that he freely discharges them from the punishment due to them. By all which testimonies from Scripture, concerning the constant use of the term ‘imputing,’ or ‘imputation,’ it is evident, that proposition, ‘that the transgression of the law is imputable from one person to another,’ hath no foundation in Scripture.

“And, therefore, thirdly and lastly, to come home to the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, I answer,

“First. That either to say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to his posterity, (of believers,) or the sin of Adam



to his, are both expressions, at least, unknown to the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures. There is neither word, nor syllable, nor letter, nor tittle of any such thing to be found there. But that the faith of him that believeth is imputed for righteousness, are words which the Holy Ghost useth.

“But, secondly, because I would make no exceptions against words, farther than necessity enforceth, I grant, there are expressions in Scripture concerning both the communication of Adam’s sin with his posterity, and the righteousness of Christ with those that believe, that will fairly enough bear the term of ‘imputation,’ if it be rightly understood, and according to the use of it in Scripture upon other occasions. But as it is commonly taken and understood by many, it occasions much error and mistake.

“Concerning Adam’s sin or disobedience, many are said to be ‘made sinners’ by it. (Rom. v. 10.) And so ‘by the obedience of Christ,’ it is said, in the same place, that ‘many shall be made righteous.’ But if men will exchange language with the Holy Ghost, they must see that they make him no loser. If when they say, ‘Adam’s sin is imputed to all unto condemnation,’ their meaning be the same with the Holy Ghost’s when he saith, that ‘by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners,’ there is no harm done: But it is evident by what many speak, that the Holy Ghost and they are not of one mind, touching the imputation or communication of Adam’s sin with his posterity, but that they differ as much in meaning, as in words. If when they say, ‘Adam’s sin is imputed to all unto condemnation,’ their meaning be this, that the guilt of Adam’s sin is charged upon his whole posterity, or that the punishment of Adam’s sin redounded from his person to his whole posterity, a main part of which punishment lieth in that original defilement wherein they are all conceived and born, and whereby they are made truly sinners before God; if this be the meaning of the term ‘imputation,’ when applied to Adam’s sin, let it pass. But if the meaning be, that that sinful act, wherein Adam transgressed when he ate the forbidden fruit, is, in the letter and formality of it, imputed to his posterity, so that by this imputation all his posterity are made



formally sinners; this is an imputation which the Scripture will never justify."

The last text necessary to mention is Rom. iv. 6: "Even as David declareth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Here, again, many expositors assume, even against the letter of the text and context, that the righteousness which God is said to impute is the righteousness of Christ. But Calvin himself may here be adduced to answer them: "In the fourth chapter of the Romans the Apostle first mentions an imputation of righteousness, and immediately represents it as consisting in remission of sins. 'David,' says he, 'describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,' &c. He there argues, not concerning a branch, but the whole, of justification; he also adduces the definition of it given by David, when he pronounces those to be blessed who receive the free forgiveness of their sins, whence it appears that this righteousness is simply opposed to guilt."\* The imputation of righteousness in this passage is, in Calvin's view, therefore, the simple non-imputation of sin, or, in other words, the remission of sins.

In none of these passages, then, is any thing found to countenance even that view of imputation which consists in the accounting the righteousness of Christ, in our justification, to be our righteousness. It is imputed in the benefit and effect of it, that is, in the blessings and privileges purchased by it; and though we may use the phrase, "the imputed righteousness of Christ," qualifying our meaning like Paræus, who says, "In this sense imputed righteousness is called 'the righteousness of Christ,' by way of merit or effect, because it is procured for us by the merit of Christ, not because it is subjectively or inherently in Christ;" yet since this manner of speaking has no foundation in Scripture, and must generally lead to misapprehensions, it will be found more conducive to the cause of truth to confine ourselves to the language of the Scriptures.

\* Institutes, lib. iii., cap. 11.

According to them, there is no fictitious accounting either of what Christ did or suffered, or of both united, to us, as being done and suffered by us, through our union with him, or through his becoming our legal representative; but his active and passive righteousness, advanced in dignity by the union of the divine nature and perfection, is the true meritorious cause of our justification. It is that great whole which constitutes his "merits;" that is, the consideration, in view of which the offended but merciful Governor of the world has determined it to be a just and righteous, as well as a merciful, act to justify the ungodly; and, for the sake of this perfect obedience of our Lord to the will of the Father, an obedience extending unto "death, even the death of the cross," to every penitent sinner who believes in him, but considered still in his own person as "ungodly," and meriting nothing but punishment, "his faith is imputed for righteousness;" it is followed by the remission of his sins and all the benefits of the evangelical covenant.

This imputation of faith for righteousness is the third opinion which we proposed to examine.

That this is the doctrine taught by the express letter of Scripture, no one can deny; and, as one well observes, "what that is which is imputed for righteousness in justification all the wisdom and learning of men is not so fit or able to determine as the Holy Ghost, speaking in Scripture, he being the great Secretary of heaven, and privy to all the counsels of God." "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 3.) "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." (Verse 5.) "We say that faith was imputed to him for righteousness." (Verse 9.) "Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." (Verses 22—24.)

The testimony of the Apostle, then, being so express on this point, the imputation of faith for righteousness must be taken to be the doctrine of the New Testament, unless, indeed,

we admit, with the advocates of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, that faith is here used metonymically for the object of faith, that is, the righteousness of Christ. The context of the above passages, however, is sufficient to refute this, and makes it indubitable that the Apostle uses the term "faith" in its proper and literal sense. In verse 5, he calls the faith of him that believeth, and which is imputed to him for righteousness, "his faith;" but in what sense could this be taken, if St. Paul meant by "his faith," the object of his faith, namely, the righteousness of Christ? And how could that be his before the imputation was made to him? Again, in verse 5, the faith spoken of is opposed to works: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Finally, in verse 22, the faith imputed to us is described to be our "believing in him who raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead:" So that the Apostle has, by these explanations, rendered it impossible for us to understand him as meaning any thing else by faith, but the act of believing. To those who will, notwithstanding this evidence from the context, still insist upon understanding faith, in these passages, to mean the righteousness of Christ, Baxter bluntly observes, "If it be not faith, indeed, that the Apostle meaneth, the context is so far from relieving our understandings, that it contributeth to our unavoidable deceit or ignorance. Read over the texts, and put but 'Christ's righteousness' every where instead of the word 'faith,' and see what a scandalous paraphrase you will make. The Scripture is not so audaciously to be corrected."

Some further observations will, however, be necessary for the clear apprehension of this doctrine.

We have already seen, in establishing the Christian doctrine of the atonement, that the law of God inflicts the penalty of death upon every act of disobedience, and that all men have come under that penalty; that men, having become totally corrupt, are not capable of obedience in future; that, if they were, there is nothing in the nature of that future obedience to be a consideration for the forgiveness of past offences, under a righteous government. It follows, therefore, that, by moral



obedience, or attempted and professed moral obedience, there can be no remission of sins, that is, no deliverance from the penalty of offences actually committed. This is the ground of the great argument of the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. He proves both Jews and Gentiles to be under sin; that the whole world is guilty before God; and by consequence under his wrath, under condemnation, from which they could only be relieved by the Gospel.

In his argument with the Jews, the subject is further opened. They sought justification by "works of law." If we take "works" to mean obedience both to the moral and ceremonial law, it makes no difference; for, as they had given up the typical character of their sacrifices, and their symbolical reference to the death of Messiah, the performance of their religious rites was no longer an expression of faith; it was brought down to the same principle as obedience to the moral law,—a simple compliance with the commands of God. Their case, then, was this: They were sinners on conviction of their law; and by obedience to it they sought justification, ignorant both of its spiritual meaning and large extent, and unmindful, too, of this obvious principle,—that no acts of obedience, even if perfect, could take away past transgression. The Apostle's great axiom on this subject is, that "by works of law, no man can be justified," and the doctrine of justification, which he teaches, is the opposite of theirs. It is, that men are sinners; that they must confess themselves such, and join to this confession a true repentance; that justification is a gratuitous act of God's mercy, a procedure of pure grace, not of debt; that in order to the exercise of this grace, on the part of God, Christ was set forth as a propitiation for sin; that his death, under this character, is a "demonstration of the righteousness of God" in the free and gratuitous remission of sins; and that this actual remission or justification follows upon believing in Christ, because faith, under this gracious constitution and method of justification, is accounted to men for righteousness; in other words, that righteousness is imputed to them upon their believing, which imputation of righteousness is, as he teaches us, in the passages before quoted, the forgiveness of



sins : for to have faith counted or imputed for righteousness is explained by David, in the psalm which the Apostle quotes, (Rom. iv.,) to have sin forgiven, covered, and not imputed. That this was no new doctrine, he shows, also, from the justification of Abraham : “ Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” (Rom. iv. 3.) “ Know ye, therefore, that they which are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Gal. iii. 7—9.)

On the one hand, therefore, it is the plain doctrine of Scripture, that man is not, and never was in any age, justified by works of any kind, whether moral or ceremonial ; on the other, that he is justified by the imputation and accounting of “ faith for righteousness.” On this point, until the Antinomian corruption began to infest the Reformed Churches, the leading commentators, from the earliest ages, were very uniform and explicit. That when faith is said to be imputed to us for righteousness, the word is taken literally, “ and not tropically, was,” says Goodwin, “ the common interpretation anciently received and followed by the principal lights of the church of God ; and for fifteen hundred years together (as far as my memory will assist me) was never questioned or contradicted. Neither did the contrary opinion ever look out into the world, till the last age. So that it is but a calumny brought upon it, (unworthy the tongue or pen of any sober man,) to make either Arminius or Socinus the author of it. And for this last hundred years and upwards, from Luther’s and Calvin’s times, the stream of interpreters agrees therewith.

“ Tertullian, who wrote about the year 194, in his fifth book against Marcion, says, ‘ But how the children of faith ? or of whose faith, if not of Abraham’s ? For if Abraham believed God, and that it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he thereby deserved the name of a father of many nations, we, also, by believing God, are justified as Abraham was.’ Therefore, Tertullian’s opinion directly is, that the faith which

is said to be imputed to Abraham for righteousness, is faith properly taken, and not the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith.

“Origen, who lived about the year 203, in his fourth book upon the Romans, chap. iv., verse 3, says, ‘It seems, therefore, that in this place also, whereas many faiths (that is, many acts of believing) of Abraham had gone before, now all his faith was collected and united together, and so was accounted unto him for righteousness.’

“Justin Martyr, who lived before them both, and not long after the Apostle John’s time, about the year 130, in his Disputation with Trypho the Jew, led them both to that interpretation: ‘Abraham carried not away the testimony of righteousness because of his circumcision, but because of his faith. For before he was circumcised this was pronounced of him,—Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.’

“Chrysostom, upon Gal. iii., says, ‘For what was Abraham the worse for not being under the law? Nothing at all. For his faith was sufficient unto him for righteousness.’ If Abraham’s faith was sufficient unto him for righteousness, it must needs be imputed by God for righteousness unto him; for it is this imputation from God that must make that sufficiency of it unto Abraham. That which will not pass in account with God for righteousness will never be sufficient for righteousness unto the creature.

“Saint Augustine, who lived about the year 390, gives frequent testimony to this interpretation. Upon Psalm cxlviii.: ‘For we, by believing, have found that which they (the Jews) lost by not believing. For Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.’ Therefore his opinion clearly is, that it was Abraham’s faith or believing, properly taken, that was imputed unto him for righteousness, and not the righteousness of Christ. For that faith of his, which was so imputed, he opposeth to the unbelief of the Jews, whereby they lost the grace and favour of God. Now, the righteousness of Christ is not opposed to unbelief, but faith properly taken. Again, writing upon Psalm lxx.: ‘For

I believe in him that justifieth the ungodly, that my faith may be imputed unto me for righteousness.' The same Father yet again, in his tract of Nature and Grace: 'But if Christ died not in vain, the ungodly is justified in Him alone: To whom, believing in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.'

"Primasius, about the year 500, writes upon Romans iv., verse 3: 'Abraham's faith, by the gift of God, was so great, that both his former sins were forgiven him, and this faith of his alone preferred, in acceptation, before all righteousness.'

"Bede, who lived somewhat before the year 700, upon Rom. iv., verse 5, observes: 'What faith but that which the Apostle in another place fully defineth: *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but faith which worketh by love?* Not any faith; but that faith which worketh by love.' Certainly, that faith which Paul defineth to be a faith working by love cannot be conceived to be the righteousness of Christ; and yet this faith it was, in the judgment of this author, that was imputed unto Abraham for righteousness.

"Haymo, about the year 840, on Rom. iv. 3, writes: 'Because he believed God, it was imputed unto him for righteousness, that is, unto remission of sins; because, by that faith wherewith he believed, he was made righteous.'

"Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury about the year 1090, upon Rom. iv. 3: 'That he' (meaning Abraham) 'believed so strongly was, by God, imputed for righteousness unto him; that is, &c., by his believing he was reputed righteous before God.'

"From all these testimonies it is apparent that the interpretation of this scripture which we contend for anciently obtained in the church of God; and no man was found to open his mouth against it till it had been established for above a thousand years. Come we to the times of Reformation; here we shall find it still maintained by men of the greatest authority and learning.

"Luther, on Gal. iii. 6: 'Christian righteousness is an affiance or faith in the Son of God; which affiance is imputed

unto righteousness, for Christ's sake.' And, in the same place, not long after : ' God, for Christ's sake, in whom I have begun to believe, accounts this ' (my) ' imperfect faith for perfect righteousness.'

" Bucer, upon Rom. iv. 3 : ' Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness ; that is, he accounted this faith for righteousness unto him. So that, by believing, he obtained this,—that God esteemed him a righteous man.'

" Peter Martyr declares himself of the same judgment, upon Rom. iv. 3 : ' To be imputed for righteousness in another sense, that by which we ourselves are reckoned in the number of the righteous. And this Paul attributes to faith only.'

" Calvin has the same interpretation upon Romans iv. 3 : ' Wherefore Abraham, by believing, doth only embrace the grace tendered unto him, that it might not be in vain. If this be imputed unto him for righteousness, it follows that he is no otherwise righteous but, as trusting or relying upon the goodness of God, he hath boldness to hope for all things from him.' Again, upon verse 5 : ' Faith is imputed for righteousness, not because it carrieth any merit from us, but because it apprehends the goodness of God.' Hence, it appears that he never thought of a tropical or metonymical sense in the word ' faith ;' but that he took it in the plain, ready, and grammatical signification.

" Musculus contends for this imputation, also, in his Common-Place of Justification, sect. v. : ' This faith should be in high esteem with us ; not in regard of the proper quality of it, but in regard of the purpose of God, whereby he hath decreed, for Christ's sake, to impute it for righteousness unto those that believe in him.' The same author, upon Gal. iii. 6 : ' What did Abraham that should be imputed unto him for righteousness, but only this,—that he believed God ?' Again : ' But when he firmly believed God promising, that very faith was imputed to him in the place of righteousness ; that is, he was of God reputed righteous for that faith, and absolved from all his sins.'

" Bullinger gives the same interpretation, upon Rom. iv. :



‘Abraham committed himself unto God by believing, and this very thing was imputed unto him for righteousness.’ And so upon Gal. iii. 6 : ‘It was imputed unto him for righteousness ; that is, that very faith of Abraham was imputed to him for righteousness, whilst he was yet uncircumcised.’

“Gaulter comes behind none of the former in avouching the grammatical against the rhetorical interpretation, upon Rom. iv. 3 : ‘Abraham believed God, and he, namely, God, imputed unto him this faith for righteousness.’

“Illyricus forsakes not his fellow-interpreters in this point, upon Romans iv. 3 : ‘That same believing was imputed unto him for righteousness.’

“Pellicanus, in like manner, says, upon Genesis xx. 6 : ‘Abraham simply believed the word of God, and required not a sign of the Lord ; and God imputed that very faith unto Abraham himself for righteousness.’

“Hunnius, another Divine, sets to his seal, on Romans iv. 3 : ‘The faith whereby Abraham believed God promising, was imputed unto him for righteousness.’

“Beza, upon the same scripture, says, ‘Here the business is, concerning that which was imputed to him, namely, his faith.’

“Junius and Tremellius are likewise of the same mind, on Gen. xv. 6 : ‘God esteemed (or accounted) him for righteous though wanting righteousness, and reckoned this in the place of righteousness,—that he embraced the promise with a firm belief.’ ”\*

Our English Divines have generally differed in their interpretations, as they have embraced or opposed the Calvinistic system ; but among the more moderate, even of that school, there have not been wanting many who have subjected their system to the express letter and obvious meaning of Scripture on this point ; not to mention those who have adopted that middle scheme which is generally, but not correctly, attributed to Baxter as the author.

When, however, we say that faith is imputed for righteous-

\* Goodwin on Justification.

ness, in order to prevent misapprehension, and fully to answer the objections raised on the other side, the meaning of the different terms of this proposition ought to be explained. They are, "righteousness," "faith," and "imputation."

To explain the first, reference has sometimes been made to the three terms used by the Apostle Paul, *δικαιωμα*, *δικαιωσις*, *δικαιοσυνη*; of which, says Baxter, "the first usually signifies the practical or preceptive matter, that is, 'righteousness;' the second, 'active; efficient justification;' the third, 'the state of the just,' qualitative or relative, or *ipsam justitiam*." Others have made these distinctions a little differently; but not much help is to be derived from them, and it is much more important to observe that the Apostle often uses the term *δικαιοσυνη*, 'righteousness,' in a passive sense for justification itself. So in Gal. ii. 21: "If righteousness" (justification) "come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness" (justification) "should have been by the law." (Gal. iii. 21.) "The Gentiles have attained to righteousness," (justification,) "even the righteousness" (justification) "which is by faith." (Rom. ix. 30.) And, in Rom. x. 4: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" where, also, we must understand righteousness to mean justification. Romans v. 18, 19, will also show that, with the Apostle, "to make righteous," and "to justify," signify the same thing; for "justification of life," in the 18th verse, is called, in the 19th, being "made righteous." To be accounted righteous is, then, in the Apostle's style, to be justified; and what is accounted or imputed to us for righteousness, is accounted or imputed to us for justification.

The second term of the above proposition which it is necessary to explain, is "faith." The true nature of justifying faith will be explained; all that it is here necessary to remark is, that it is not every act of faith, or faith in the general truths of revelation, which is imputed for righteousness, although justifying faith supposes this general faith, or belief in the word of God. By faith we understand that the worlds were

framed by the word of God ; but it is not our faith in creation which is imputed to us for righteousness. So in the case of Abraham ; he not only had faith in the truths of the religion of which he was the teacher and guardian, but had exercised affiance also in some particular promises of God, before he exhibited that great act of faith which was “counted to him for righteousness,” and which made his justification the pattern of the justification of sinful men in all ages. But having received the promise of a son, from whom the Messiah should spring in whom all nations were to be blessed ; and, “being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, nor yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb ; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform, and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” (Rom. iv. 19, 23.) His faith had Messiah for its great and ultimate object, and in its nature it was an entire affiance in the promise and faithfulness of God, with reference to the Holy Seed. So the object of that faith which is imputed to us for righteousness is Christ ; Christ as having made atonement for our sins ; (the remission of our sins, as expressly taught by St. Paul, being obtained by “faith in his blood ;”) and it is in its nature an entire affiance in the promise of God to this effect, made to us through his atonement, and founded upon it. Faith being thus understood, excludes all notion of its meritoriousness. It is not faith generally considered, which is imputed to us for righteousness ; but faith (trust) in an atonement offered by another in our behalf ; by which trust in something without ourselves, we acknowledge our own insufficiency, guilt, and unworthiness, and directly ascribe merit to that in which we trust, namely, the propitiation of the blood of Christ.

The third term is “imputation.” The original verb is well enough translated “to impute,” in the sense of “to reckon, to account ;” but, as we have stated above, it is never used to signify imputation in the sense of account-



ing the actions of one person to have been performed by another.

A man's sin or righteousness is imputed to him, when he is considered as actually the doer of sinful or of righteous acts ; (in which sense the word "repute" is in more general use ;) he is, in consequence, reputed a vicious or a holy man. A man's sin or righteousness is imputed to him in its legal consequence, under a government of rewards and punishments ; and then to impute sin or righteousness signifies, in a legal sense, to reckon and to account it, to acquit or condemn, and forthwith to punish, or to exempt from punishment. Thus Shimei entreats David, that he would "not impute folly to him," that is, that he would not punish his folly. In this sense, too, David speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord "imputeth not sin," that is, whom he forgives, so that the legal consequence of his sin shall not fall upon him. This non-imputation of sin, to a sinner, is expressly called the "imputation of righteousness, without works ;" the imputation of righteousness is, then, the non-punishment, or the pardon, of sin ; and if this passage be read in its connexion, it will also be seen, that by "imputing" faith for righteousness, the Apostle means precisely the same thing. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness ; even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin." This quotation from David would have been nothing to the Apostle's purpose, unless he had understood the forgiveness of sins, and the imputation of righteousness, and the non-imputation of sin, to signify the same thing as "counting faith for righteousness," with only this difference, that the introduction of the term "faith" marks the manner in which the forgiveness of sin is obtained. To impute faith for righteousness, is nothing more than to be justified by faith, which is also called by St. Paul, "being made righteous," that is, being placed by an act of free forgiveness, through



faith in Christ, in the condition of righteous men, in this respect, that the penalty of the law does not lie against them, and that they are restored to the divine favour.

From this brief, but, it is hoped, clear explanation of these terms, "righteousness," "faith," and "imputation," it will appear, that it is not quite correct in the advocates of the Scripture doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness, to say, that our faith in Christ is accepted in the place of personal obedience to the law, except, indeed, in this loose sense, that our faith in Christ as effectually exempts us from punishment, as if we had been personally obedient. The scriptural doctrine is rather, that the death of Christ is accepted in the place of our personal punishment, on condition of our faith in him ; and that, when faith in him is actually exerted, then comes in, on the part of God, the act of imputing, or reckoning, righteousness to us ; or, what is the same thing, accounting faith for righteousness, that is, pardoning our offences through faith, and treating us as the objects of his restored favour.

To this doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness, the principal objections which have been made admit of an easy answer.

The first is that of the Papists, who take the term "justification" to signify the making men morally just or righteous ; and they, therefore, argue, that as faith alone is not righteousness in the moral sense, it would be false, and, therefore, impossible, to impute it for righteousness. But, as we have proved from Scripture, that justification simply signifies the pardon of sin, this objection has no foundation.

A second objection is, that if faith, that is, believing, is imputed for righteousness, then justification is by works, or by somewhat in ourselves. In this objection, the term "works" is equivocal. If it mean works of obedience to the moral law, the objection is unfounded ; for faith is not a work of this kind : And if it mean the merit of works of any kind, it is equally without foundation ; for no merit is allowed to faith, and faith, in the sense of exclusive affiance, or trusting in the merits of another, shuts out, by its very nature, all

assumption of merit to ourselves, or there would be no need of resorting to another's merit: But if it mean, that faith or believing is the doing of something in order to our justification, it is, in this view, the performance of a condition, a *sine quâ non*, which is not only not forbidden in Scripture, but required of us,—“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent;” “he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” And so far is this considered by the Apostle Paul, as prejudicing the free grace of God in our justification, that he makes our justification by faith the proof of its gratuitous nature: “For by grace are ye saved, through faith.” “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.”

A third objection is, that the imputation of faith for righteousness gives occasion to boasting, which is condemned by the Gospel. The answer to this is, 1. That the objection lies with equal strength against the theory of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, since faith is required in order to that imputation. 2. Boasting of our faith is cut off by the consideration, that this faith itself is the gift of God. 3. If it were not, yet the blessings which follow upon our faith are not given with reference to any worth or merit which there may be in our believing, but are given with respect to the death of Christ, from the bounty and grace of God. 4. St. Paul was clearly of the contrary opinion, who tells us that “boasting is excluded by the law of faith:” The reason of which has been already stated, that trust in another for salvation does, *ipso facto*, attribute to another the power, and consequently the honour, of saving, and denies both to ourselves.

Since, then, we are “justified by faith,” our next inquiry must be, somewhat more particularly, into the specific quality of that faith which thus, by the appointment of God, leads to this important change in our relations to the Being whom we have offended, so that our offences are freely forgiven, and we are restored to his favour.

On the subject of justifying faith, so many distinctions have been set up, so many logical terms and distinctions are found in the writings of systematic Divines, and often, as Baxter

has it, "such quibbling and jingling of a mere sound of words," that the simple Christian, to whom this subject ought always to be made plain, has often been grievously perplexed, and no small cause has been given for the derision of infidels. On this, as on other points, we appeal "to the law and testimony," to Christ and his Apostles, who are, at once, the only true authorities, and teachers of the greatest simplicity.

We remark, then,

1. That, in Scripture, faith is presented to us under two leading views. The first is that of assent or persuasion; the second, that of confidence or reliance. That the former may be separated from the latter, is also plain; though the latter cannot exist without the former. Faith, in the sense of intellectual assent to truth, is allowed to be possessed by devils. A dead inoperative faith is also supposed, or declared, to be possessed by wicked men, professing Christianity; for our Lord represents persons coming to him at the last day, saying, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" &c., to whom he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." And yet the charge in this place does not lie against the sincerity of their belief, but against their conduct as "workers of iniquity." As this distinction is taught in Scripture, so it is also observed in experience, that assent to the truths of revealed religion may result from examination and conviction, whilst yet the spirit and conduct may be unrenewed and wholly worldly.

On the other hand, that the faith which God requires of men always comprehends confidence or reliance, as well as assent or persuasion, is equally clear. The faith by which "the Elders obtained a good report," was of this character; it united assent to the truth of God's revelations, to a noble confidence in his promises. "Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not confounded." We have a further illustration in our Lord's address to his disciples upon the withering away of the fig-tree: "Have faith in God." He did not question whether they believed the existence of God, but exhorted them to confidence in his promises, when called by him to contend with mountainous difficulties: "Have faith in God; for verily I say



unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that these things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." It was in reference to his simple confidence in Christ's power that our Lord so highly commended the Centurion, (Matt. viii. 10,) and said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And all the instances of faith in the persons miraculously healed by Christ were also of this kind: It was belief in his claims, and also confidence in his goodness and power.

The faith in Christ, which in the New Testament is connected with salvation, is clearly of this nature; that is, it combines assent with reliance, belief with trust. "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name," that is, in dependence upon my interest and merits, "he shall give it you." Christ was preached both to Jews and Gentiles as the object of their trust, because he was preached as the only true sacrifice for sin; and they were required to renounce their dependence upon their own accustomed sacrifices, and to transfer that dependence to his death and mediation,—and "in his name shall the Gentiles trust." He is set forth as a propitiation, "through faith in his blood;" which faith can neither merely mean assent to the historical fact that his blood was shed by a violent death, nor mere assent to the general doctrine that his blood had an atoning quality; but as all expiatory offerings were trusted in as the means of propitiation both among Jews and Gentiles, that faith or trust was now to be exclusively rendered to the blood of Christ, heightened by the stronger demonstrations of a divine appointment.

To the most unlettered Christian this, then, will be very obvious, that that faith in Christ which is required of us, consists both of assent and trust; and the necessity of maintaining these inseparably united will further appear by considering, that it is not a blind and superstitious trust in the sacrifice of Christ, like that of the Heathens in their sacrifices, which leads to salvation; nor the presumptuous trust of wicked and impenitent men, who depend on Christ to save them in their sins; but such a trust as is exercised according to the authority



and direction of the word of God ; so that to know the Gospel in its leading principles, and to have a cordial belief in it, is necessary to that more specific act of faith which is called "reliance," or, in systematic language, "fiducial assent," of which cometh salvation. The Gospel, as the scheme of man's salvation, supposes that he is under the law ; that this law of God has been violated by all ; and that every man is under sentence of death. Serious consideration of our ways, confession of the fact, and sorrowful conviction of the evil and danger of sin, will follow the gift of repentance, and a cordial belief of the testimony of God, and we shall thus turn to God with contrite hearts, and earnest prayers and supplications for his mercy. This is called "repentance towards God ;" and repentance being the first subject of evangelical preaching, and then the belief of the Gospel, it is plain, that Christ is only immediately held out, in this divine plan of our redemption, as the object of trust in order to forgiveness to persons in this state of penitence, and under this sense of danger. The degree of sorrow for sin, and alarm upon this discovery of our danger as sinners, is nowhere fixed in Scripture ; only it is supposed every where, that it is such as to lead men to inquire earnestly, "What shall I do to be saved ?" and to use all the appointed means of salvation, as those who feel that their salvation is at issue ; that they are in a lost condition, and must be pardoned or perish. To all such persons, Christ, as the only atonement for sin, is exhibited as the object of their trust, with the promise of God, "that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Nothing is required of such but this actual trust in, and personal apprehension or taking hold of, the merits of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin ; and upon their thus believing, they are justified ; their "faith is counted for righteousness."

This appears to be the plain scriptural representation of this doctrine ; and we may infer from it, 1. That the faith by which we are justified is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the Gospel, which leaves the heart unmoved and unaffected by a sense of the evil and danger of sin and the desire of salvation, although it supposes this assent ; nor, 2. Is it that

more lively and cordial assent to, and belief in, the doctrine of the Gospel, touching our sinful and lost condition, which is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, and from which springeth repentance, although this must precede it ; nor, 3. Is it only the assent of the mind to the method by which God justifies the ungodly by faith in the sacrifice of his Son, although this is an element of it ; but it is a hearty concurrence of “ the will and affections with this plan of salvation, which implies a renunciation of every other refuge,” “ and an actual trust in the Saviour, and personal apprehension of his merits :” “ Such a belief of the Gospel by the power of the Spirit of God as leads us to come to Christ, to receive Christ, to trust in Christ, and to commit the keeping of our souls into his hands, in humble confidence of his ability and his willingness to save us.” \*

This is that qualifying condition to which the promise of God annexes justification ; that without which justification would not take place ; and in this sense it is, that we are justified by faith ; not by the merit of faith, but by faith instrumentally as this condition ; for its connexion with the benefit arises from the merits of Christ, and the promise of God. “ If Christ had not merited, God had not promised ; if God had not promised, justification had never followed upon this faith ; so that the indissoluble connexion of faith and justification is from God’s institution, whereby he hath bound himself to give the benefit upon performance of the condition. Yet there is an aptitude in this faith to be made a condition ; for no other act can receive Christ as a Priest propitiating and pleading the propitiation, and the promise of God for his sake to give the benefit. As receiving Christ and the gracious promise in this manner, it acknowledgeth man’s guilt, and so man renounceth all righteousness in himself, and honoureth God the Father, and Christ the Son the only Redeemer. It glorifies God’s mercy and free grace in the highest degree. It acknowledgeth on earth, as it will be perpetually acknowledged in heaven, that the whole salvation of sinful man, from

the beginning to the last degree thereof, whereof there shall be no end, is from God's freest love, Christ's merit and intercession, his own gracious promise, and the power of his own Holy Spirit.\*

Justification by faith alone is thus clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures; and it was this great doctrine, brought forth again from the Scriptures into public view, and maintained by their authority, which constituted one of the main pillars of the Reformation from Popery; and on which no compromise could be allowed with that corrupt Church which had substituted for it the merit of works. Melancthon, in his Apology for the Augsburg Confession, thus speaks: "To represent justification by faith only, has been considered objectionable; though Paul concludes that 'a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;' 'that we are justified freely by his grace,' and 'that it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.' If the use of the exclusive term 'only' is deemed inadmissible, let them expunge from the writings of the Apostles the exclusive phrases 'by grace,' 'not of works,' 'the gift of God,' and others of similar import." "We are accounted righteous before God," says the Eleventh Article of the Church of England, "only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, not for our works and deservings;" and again, in the Homily on Salvation, "St. Paul declares nothing upon the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, which, nevertheless, is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God. And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but only shutteth them out from the office of justifying. So that although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not all together."

It is an error, therefore, to suppose, as many have done, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone is peculiarly a Calvinistic one. It has, in consequence, often been attacked under this mistake, and confounded with the peculiarities of that system, by writers of limited reading, or perverting

\* Lawson,



ingenuity. It is the doctrine, as we have seen, not of the Calvinistic Confessions only, but of the Lutheran Church, and of the Church of England. It was the doctrine of the Dutch Remonstrants, at least of the early Divines of that party ; and although, among many Divines of the Church of England, the errors of Popery on the subject of justification have had their influence, and some, who have contended for justification by faith alone, have lowered the scriptural standard of believing, the doctrine itself has often been very ably maintained by its later non-Calvinistic Divines. Thus justification by faith alone—faith which excludes all works, both of the ceremonial and moral law ; all works performed by Gentiles under the law of nature ; all works of evangelical obedience, though they spring from faith—has been defended by Whitby, who was a decided anti-Calvinist, in the preface to his notes on the Epistle to the Galatians. The same may be said of many others ; and we may, finally, refer to Mr. Wesley, who revived, by his preaching and writings, an evangelical Arminianism in this country ; and who has most clearly and ably established this truth in connexion with the doctrine of general redemption, and God's universal love to man :—

“By affirming that faith is the term or condition of justification, I mean, first, that there is no justification without it. ‘He that believeth not is condemned already ;’ and so long as he believeth not that condemnation cannot be removed, but the ‘wrath of God abideth on him.’ As ‘there is no other name given under heaven than that of Jesus of Nazareth,’ no other merit whereby a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin ; so there is no other way of obtaining a share in his merit, than by faith in his name ; so that, as long as we are without this faith, we are ‘strangers to the covenant of promise,’ we are ‘aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world.’ Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have, (I speak of those unto whom the Gospel is preached ; for ‘what have I to do to judge them that are without ?’) whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not ; he is still a child of wrath, still under the curse, till he believe in Jesus.



“Faith, therefore, is the necessary condition of justification ; yea, and the only necessary condition thereof. This is the second point carefully to be observed,—that the very moment God giveth faith (for it is the gift of God) to the ‘ungodly that worketh not,’ that ‘faith is counted to him for righteousness.’ He hath no righteousness at all antecedent to this ; not so much as negative righteousness, or innocence. But ‘faith is imputed to him for righteousness’ the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as was observed before) thinketh him to be what he is not ; but as he ‘made Christ to be a sin-offering for us,’ that is, treated him as a sinner, punished him for our sins ; so he counteth us righteous from the time we believe in him ; that is, he doth not punish us for our sins, yea, treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous.

“Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition, that faith is the only condition of justification, must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby this much, that it is the only thing without which no one is justified ; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have every thing else, without faith, yet he cannot be justified ; so, on the other, though he be supposed to want every thing else, yet, if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner, of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell-fire ; suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, (which, indeed, he cannot do but by the grace of God,) who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment ? Who will affirm that any more is indispensably required before that sinner can be justified ?”\*

To the view of justifying faith we have attempted to establish,—namely, the entire trust and reliance of an awakened and penitent sinner in the atonement of Christ alone, as the meritorious ground of his pardon,—some objections have been

made, and some contrary hypotheses opposed, which it will be necessary to bring to the test of the word of God.

The general objection is, that it is a doctrine unfavourable to morality. This was the objection in St. Paul's day, and it has been urged by some in all subsequent times. It proceeds, however, upon a great misapprehension of the doctrine; and has sometimes been suggested by that real abuse of it to which all truth is liable by men of perverted minds and corrupted hearts. Some of these have pretended, or deceived themselves into the conclusion, that if the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ only be relied upon, however presumptuously, the sins which they commit will be forgiven; and that there is no motive, at least from fear of consequences, to avoid sin. Others, observing this abuse, or misled, probably, by incautious statements of sincere persons on this point, have concluded this to be the logical consequence of the doctrine, however innocently it may sometimes be held. Attempts have, therefore, been made to guard the doctrine; and from these, on the other hand, great errors have arisen. The Romish Church contends for justification by inherent righteousness, and makes faith a part of that righteousness. Others contend that faith signifies obedience; others place justification in faith and good works united; others hold that faith gives us an interest in the merit of Christ, to make up the deficiency of a sincere but imperfect obedience; others think that true faith is, in itself, essentially and *per se*, the necessary root of obedience.

The proper answer to the objection that justification by faith only leads to licentiousness, is, that "though we are justified by faith alone," the faith by which we are justified is not alone in the heart which exercises it. In receiving Christ, as the writers of the Reformation often say, "faith is *sola*, yet not *solitaria*." It is not the trust of a man asleep and secure, but the trust of one awakened, and aware of the peril of eternal death as the wages of sin; it is not the trust of a man ignorant of the spiritual meaning of God's holy law, but of one who is convinced and "slain" by it; not the trust of an impenitent, but of a penitent, man; the trust of one, in

a word, who feels, through the convincing power of the word and Spirit of God, that he is justly exposed to wrath, and in whom this conviction produces a genuine sorrow for sin, and an intense and supreme desire to be delivered from its penalty and dominion. Now, that all this is substantially, or more particularly, in the experience of all who pass into this state of justification through faith, is manifest from the 7th and 8th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, in which the moral state of man is traced in the experience of St. Paul as an example, from his conviction of sin by the law of God, revealed to him in its spirituality, to his entrance into the condition and privileges of a justified state. We see here guilt, fear, a vain struggle with bondage, poignant distress, self-despair, readiness to submit to any effectual mode of deliverance which may be offered, acceptance of salvation by Christ, the immediate removal of condemnation, dominion over sin, with all the fruits of regeneration, and the lofty hopes of the glory of God. So far, then, is the doctrine of justification by faith only from leading to a loose and careless conduct, that that very state of mind in which alone this faith can be exercised is one which excites the most earnest longings and efforts of mind to be free from the bondage of sin, as well as from its penalty; and to be free from its penalty in order that freedom from its bondage may follow. As this is proved by the 7th chapter of the Epistle referred to, so the former part of the 8th, which continues the discourse, (unfortunately broken by the division of the chapters,) shows the moral state which is the immediate result of "being in Christ Jesus," through the exercise of that faith which alone, as we have seen, can give us a personal interest in him. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." This is the first result of the pardon of sin, a consequent exemption from condemnation. The next is manifestly concomitant with it: "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" which is now, in its fulness, imparted to them; and by which, being regenerated, they are delivered from the bondage before described, and walk after his will, and under his sanctifying influence. This brings us precisely to the answer that the



Apostle himself gives to the objection to which we are referring, in the 6th chapter: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" The moral state of every man who is justified is here described to be, that he is "dead to sin." Not that justification, strictly, is a death unto sin, or regeneration; but into this state it immediately brings us, so that, though they are properly distinguished in the order of our thoughts, and in the nature of things, they go together; he to whom "there is no condemnation," walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and he who experiences the "abounding of the grace of God" in his pardon, is "dead to sin," and cannot, therefore, continue therein. This is the effect of the faith that justifies; from that alone, as it brings us to Christ our Deliverer, our entire deliverance from sin can follow; and thus the doctrine of faith becomes exclusively the doctrine of holiness, and points out the only remedy for sin's dominion.

It is true, that some colour would be given to the contrary opinion, were it to be admitted that this act of faith, followed by our justification, did indefeasibly settle our right to eternal blessedness, by a title not to be vitiated by any future transgression; but this doctrine, which forms a part of the theory of the Calvinists, we shall, in its place, show to be unscriptural. It is enough here to say, that it has no connexion with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, though so often ignorantly identified with it. Our probation is not terminated by our pardon. Wilful sin will infallibly plunge us again into condemnation, with heightened aggravations and hazards; and he only retains this state of favour who continues to believe with that same faith which brings to him, not only the assurances of God's mercy, but the continually-renewing influences of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of justification by faith alone, as stated in the Scriptures, needs not, therefore, any of those guards and cautions which we have enumerated above, and which all involve serious errors, which it may not be useless to point out:—

1. The error of the Romish Church is to confound justifica-



tion and sanctification. So the Council of Trent declares, that "justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification of the inner man; and that the only formal cause of justification is the righteousness of God, not that whereby he is just, but that by which he makes us just;" that is, inherently so. That justification and sanctification go together, we have seen; but this is not what is meant by the Council. Their doctrine is, that man is made just or holy, and then justified. The answer to this has been already given. God "justifieth the ungodly;" and the Scriptures plainly mean by justification, not sanctification, but simply the remission of sin, as already established. The passages, also, above quoted, show that those who hold this doctrine reverse the order of the Scriptures. The sanctification which constitutes a man inherently righteous is concomitant with justification, but does not precede it. Before "condemnation" is taken away, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" when "there is now no condemnation," he "walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." In the nature of things, too, justification and sanctification are distinct. The active sanctification of the Spirit, taken in itself, either habitually or actually, and as inherent in us, can in nowise be justification; for justification is the remission of sins. God gave this Spirit to angels; he gave it to Adam in the day of creation; and this Spirit did sanctify, and now doth sanctify, the blessed angels; yet this sanctification is not remission. Sanctification cannot be the formal cause of justification, any more than justification can be the formal cause of glorification; for, however all these may be connected, they are things perfectly distinct and different in their nature. "There be two kinds of Christian righteousness," says Hooker, "the one without us, which we have by imputation; the other in us, which consisteth of faith, hope, and charity, and other Christian virtues. God giveth us both the one justice and the other; the one by accepting us for righteous in Christ, the other by working Christian righteousness in us."\*

\* Discourse of Justification.

2. To the next opinion, that justifying faith, in the Christian sense, includes works of evangelical obedience, and is not, therefore, simple affiance or fiducial assent, the answer of Whitby is forcible : “ The Scripture is express and frequent in the assertion, that believers ‘are justified by faith ;’ in which expression either faith must include works of evangelical obedience, or it doth not : If it doth not, we are justified by faith alone ; and that it doth not formally include works of evangelical righteousness, appears, (1.) From the plain distinction which the Scripture puts between them, when it informs us, that faith works by love, is shown forth by our works, and exhorts us to add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge ; and, (2.) Because it is not reasonable to conceive, that Christ and his Apostles, making use of a word which had a known and fixed import, should mean more by this word than what it signified in common use ; as sure they must have done, had they included in the meaning of the word the whole of our evangelical righteousness.”\* To this we may add, that in every discourse of St. Paul, as to our justification, faith and works are opposed to each other ; and further, that his argument necessarily excludes works of evangelical obedience. For as it clearly excludes all works of ceremonial law, so also all works of obedience to the moral law ; and that not with any reference to their degree, as perfect or imperfect, but with reference to their nature as works : So then, for this same reason must all works of evangelical obedience be excluded from the office of justifying ; for they are also moral works, works of obedience to the same law which is in force under the Gospel ; and however they may be performed, whether by the assistance of the Spirit or without that assistance, whether they spring from faith or any other principle,—these are mere circumstances which alter not the nature of the acts themselves ; they are works still, and are opposed by the Apostle to grace and faith. “ And if by grace, then it is no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace : But if it be of works, then is it no more (of) grace ; otherwise work is no more work.” (Rom. xi. 6.)

\* Preface to Galatians.

3. A third notion which has been adopted to guard the doctrine of justification by faith is, that faith apprehends and appropriates the merits of Christ to make up for the deficiency of our imperfect obedience. There must, therefore, in order to justification, be a sincere endeavour after obedience, and in this the required guard of the doctrine is supposed to lie ; but fully to obtain justification where obedience is still imperfect though sincere, requires faith.

It is a sufficient refutation of this theory, that no intimation is given of it in Scripture, and it is indeed contradicted by it. Either this sincere and imperfect obedience has its share in our justification, or it has not ; if it has, we are justified by works and faith united, which has just been disproved ; if it has not, then we are justified by faith alone, in the manner before explained.

4. The last error referred to is that which represents faith as, *per se*, the necessary root of obedience : So that justification by faith alone may be allowed ; but then the guard against abuse is said to consist in this, that true faith is itself so eminent a virtue, that it naturally produces good works.

The objection to this statement lies not, indeed, so much to the substantial truth of the doctrine taught by it, or to what is perhaps intended by most of those who so speak, (for similar modes of expression we find in the writings of many of the elder Divines of the Reformation, who most strenuously advocated justification by faith alone,) but to the view under which it is presented. Faith, when genuine, is necessarily the “root and mother of obedience ;” and good works of every kind, without exception, do also necessarily spring from it. But though we say necessarily, we do not say naturally. The error lies in considering faith in Christ as so eminently a moral virtue, so great an act of obedience, that it must always argue a converted and renewed state of mind wherever it exists, from which, therefore, obedience must flow. We have, however, seen, that regeneration does not precede justification ; that till justification man is under bondage ; and that he does not “walk after the Spirit,” until he is so “in Christ Jesus,” that to him “there is now no condemnation ;”



yet faith, all acknowledge, must precede justification, and it cannot, therefore, presuppose a regenerate state of mind. The truth, then, is, that faith does not produce obedience by any virtue which there is in it, *per se*; nor as it supposes a previous renewal of heart; but as it unites to Christ, gives us a personal interest in the covenant of God's mercy, and obtains for us, as an accomplished condition, our justification, from which flow the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the regeneration of our nature. The strength of faith lies not, then, in what it is in itself, but in what it interests us in; it necessarily leads to good works, because it necessarily leads to justification, on which immediately follows our "new creation in Christ Jesus to good works, that we may walk in them."

There are yet a few theories on the subject of justification to be stated and examined; which, however, the principles already established will enable us briefly to dismiss.

That of the Romish Church, which confounds sanctification with justification, has been already noticed. The influence of this theory may be traced in the writings of some leading Divines of the English Church, who were not fully imbued with the doctrines of the Reformers on this great point, such as Bishop Taylor, Archbishop Tillotson, and others, who make regeneration necessary to justification; and also in many Divines of the Calvinistic Nonconformist class, who make regeneration also to precede justification, though not, like the former, as a condition of justification.

The source of this error appears to be twofold:—

It arises, first, from a loose and general notion of the scriptural doctrine of regeneration; and, secondly, from confounding that change which true evangelical repentance doubtless implies, with regeneration itself. A few observations will dissipate these erroneous impressions.

As to those previous changes of mind and conduct, which they often argue from, as proving a new state of mind and character, they are far from marking that defined and unequivocal state of renovation which our Lord expresses by the phrases, "born again," and "born of the Spirit," and which St. Paul evidently explains by being "created anew," "a new crea-



tion ; ” “ living after the Spirit,” and “ walking in the Spirit.” In the established order in which God effects this mighty renovation of a nature previously corrupt, in answer to prayers directed to him with confidence in his promises to that effect in Christ Jesus, there must be a previous process, which Divines have called by the expressive names of “awakening,” and “conviction ; ” that is, the sleep of indifference to spiritual concerns is removed, and conviction of the sad facts of the case of a man who has hitherto lived in sin, and under the sole dominion of a carnal and earthly mind, is fixed in the judgment and the conscience. From this arises an altered and a corrected view of things ; apprehension of danger ; desire of deliverance ; abhorrence of the evils of the heart and the life ; strong efforts for freedom, resisted, however, by the bondage of established habits and innate corruptions ; and a still deeper sense, in consequence, of the need not only of pardon, but of that almighty and renewing influence which alone can effect the desired change. It is in this state of mind, that the prayer becomes at once heartfelt and appropriate, “ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

But all this is not regeneration ; it is rather the effect of the full and painful discovery of the want of it. Nor will “ fruits meet for repentance ”—the effects of an alarmed conscience and of a corrected judgment, the efforts to be right, however imperfect, which are the signs, we also grant, of sincerity—prove more than that the preparatory process is going on under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Others may endeavour to persuade a person in this state of mind that he is regenerate : But the absence of love to God as his reconciled Father ; the evils which he detests having still, in many respects, the dominion over him ; the resistance of his heart to the unaccustomed yoke, when the sharp pangs of his convictions do not, for the moment, arm him with new powers of contest ; his pride ; his remaining self-righteousness ; his reluctance to be saved wholly as a sinner ; whose repentance, and all its fruits, however exact and copious, merit nothing ; all assure him that, even should he often feel that he is “ not

far from the kingdom of God," he has not entered it, that his burden is not removed, that his bonds are not broken, that he is not "walking in the Spirit," that he is, at best, but a struggling slave, not "the Lord's free man." But there is a point which, when passed, changes the scene: He believes wholly in Christ; he is justified by faith; he is comforted by the Spirit's witnessing with his spirit that he is now a child of God; he serves God from filial love; he has received new powers; the chain of his bondage is broken, and he is delivered; he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; he is "dead to sin, and cannot continue longer therein," and the fruits of the Spirit are in him,—“love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance.” He is now, and not till now, in a regenerate state, as that state is described in the Scriptures. Before, he was a seeker, now he has obtained what he sought; and he obtains it concomitantly with justification.

Still, indeed, it may be said that, call this previous state what you will, either regeneration or repentance, it is necessary to justification; and therefore justification is not by faith alone. We answer, that we cannot call it a regenerated state, a being "born of the Spirit," for the Scriptures do not so designate it; and it is clear that the fruits of the Spirit do not belong to it; and, therefore, there is an absence, not indeed of the work of the Spirit, for all has its origin there, but of that work of the Spirit by which we are "born again," strictly and properly. Nor is the connexion of this preparatory process with justification of the same nature as that of faith with justification. It is necessary, it is true, as hearing the word is necessary, for "faith cometh by hearing;" and it is necessary as leading to prayer and to faith, for prayer is the language of discovered want, and faith in another, in the sense of trust, is the result of self-diffidence and self-despair; but it is necessary remotely, not immediately. This distinction is clearly and accurately expressed by Mr. Wesley: \* "And yet I allow you this, that although both repentance and the fruits

thereof are, in some sense, necessary before justification, yet neither the one nor the other is necessary in the same sense, nor in the same degree, with faith. Not in the same degree ; for in whatever moment a man believes, in the Christian sense of the word, he is justified, his sins are blotted out, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. But it is not so at whatever moment he repents, or brings forth any or all the fruits of repentance. Faith alone, therefore, justifies, which repentance alone does not ; much less any outward work ; and, consequently, none of these are necessary to justification in the same degree as faith. Nor in the same sense ; for none of these has so direct and immediate relation to justification as faith. This is proximately necessary thereto ; repentance and its fruits remotely, as these are necessary to the increase and continuance of faith. And even in this sense these are only necessary on supposition that there is time and opportunity for them : For in many instances there is not ; but God cuts short his work, and faith prevents the fruits of repentance. So that the general proposition is not overthrown, but clearly established, by these concessions ; and we conclude still, both on the authority of Scripture and the Church, that faith alone is the proximate condition of justification.”\*

If regeneration, in the sense in which it is used in Scripture, and not loosely and vaguely, as by many Divines, both ancient and modern, is then a concomitant of justification, it cannot be a condition of it ; and as we have shown that all the changes which repentance implies fall short of regeneration, repentance is not an evidence of a regenerate state ; and thus the theory of justification by regeneration is untenable. A second theory, not, indeed, substantially different from the former, but put into different phrase, and more formally laboured, is that of Bishop Bull, which gave rise to the celebrated controversy of his day, upon the publication of his *Harmonia Apostolica* ; and it is one which has left the deepest impress upon the views of the Clergy of the English Church, and contributed more than any thing else to obscure



her true doctrine, as contained in her Articles and Homilies, on this leading point of experimental theology. This theory is professedly that of justification by works, with these qualifications, that the works are evangelical, or such as proceed from faith ; that they are done by the assistance of the Spirit of God ; and that such works are not meritorious, but a necessary condition of justification. To establish this hypothesis, it was necessary to evade the force of the words of St. Paul ; and the learned Prelate just mentioned, therefore, reverses the usual practice of commentators, which is to reconcile St. James to St. Paul on the doctrine of justification ; and, assuming that St. James speaks clearly and explicitly, and St. Paul, on this point, things “hard to be understood,” he interprets the latter by the former, and reconciles St. Paul to St. James. According, then, to this opinion, St. James explicitly asserts the doctrine of justification of sinful men before God by the works which proceed from faith in Christ. St. Paul, therefore, when he denies that man can be justified by works, refers, simply, to works of obedience to the Mosaic law ; and by “the faith which justifies,” he means the works which spring from faith. Thus the two Apostles are harmonized by Bishop Bull.

The main pillar of this scheme is, that St. James teaches the doctrine of justification before God by works springing from faith in Christ ; and as it is necessary, in a discourse on justification, to ascertain the meaning of this Apostle in the passages referred to,—both because his words may appear to form an objection to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which we have established, and also on account of the misleading statements which are found in many of the attempts which have been made to reconcile the two Apostles,—this may be a proper place for that inquiry ; the result of which will show, that Bishop Bull, and the Divines of that school, have as greatly mistaken St. James as they have mistaken St. Paul.

We observe, then, 1. That to interpret St. Paul by St. James involves this manifest absurdity,—that it is interpreting a writer who treats professedly and in a set discourse on the



subject in question,—the justification of a sinful man before God,—by a writer who, if he could be allowed to treat of that subject with the same design, does it but incidentally. This itself makes it clear that the great *axiomata*, the principles of this doctrine must be first sought for in the writer who enters professedly, and by copious argument, into the inquiry.

But, 2. The two Apostles do not engage in the same argument; and for this reason, that they are not addressing themselves to persons in the same circumstances. St. Paul addresses the unbelieving Jews, who sought justification by obedience to the law of Moses, moral and ceremonial; proves that all men are guilty, and that neither Jew nor Gentile can be justified by works of obedience to any law; and that, therefore, justification must be by faith alone. On the other hand, St. James, having to do, in his Epistle, with such as professed the Christian faith, and justification by it, but who erred dangerously about the nature of faith, affirming that faith, in the sense of opinion or mere belief of doctrine, would save them, though they should remain destitute of a real change in the moral frame and constitution of their minds, and give no evidence of such a change in a holy life, it became necessary for him to plead the renovation of man's nature, and evangelical obedience, as the necessary fruits of real or living faith. The question discussed by St. Paul is, whether works would justify; that by St. James is, whether a dead faith, the mere faith of assent, would save.

3. St. Paul and St. James do not use the term "justification" in the same sense. The former uses it, as we have seen, for the pardon of sin, the accepting and treating as righteous one who is guilty, but penitent. But that St. James does not speak of this kind of justification is most evident from his reference to the case of Abraham: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Does St. James mean that Abraham was then justified in the sense of being forgiven? Certainly not: For St. Paul, when speaking of the justification of Abraham, in the sense of his forgiveness before God, by the imputation of his faith for righteousness,

fixes that event many years previously, even before Isaac was born, and when the promise of a seed was made to him ; for it is added by Moses, when he gives an account of this transaction, “ And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Gen. xv. 6.) If, then, St. James speaks of the same kind of justification, he contradicts St. Paul and Moses, by implying that Abraham was not pardoned and received into God’s favour until the offering of Isaac. If no one will maintain this, then the justification of Abraham, mentioned by St. James, it is plain, does not mean the forgiveness of his sins ; and he uses the term in a different sense from St. Paul.

4. The only sense, then, in which St. James can take the term “justification,” when he says that Abraham was “justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar,” is, that his works manifested or proved that he was justified, proved that he was really justified by faith ; or, in other words, that the faith by which he was justified was not dead and inoperative, but living and active. This is abundantly confirmed by what follows. So far is St. James from denying that Abraham was justified by the imputation of his faith for righteousness, long before he offered up his son Isaac, that he expressly allows it by quoting the passage (Gen. xv. 6) in which this is said to have taken place at least twenty-five years before ; and he makes use of Abraham’s subsequent works in the argument, expressly to illustrate the vital and obedient nature of the faith by which he was at first justified : “ Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect, and the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God,” (in a transaction twenty-five years previous,) “ and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.” This quotation of James, from Gen. xv. 6, demands special notice. “ And the scripture,” he says, “ was fulfilled, which saith,” &c. Whitby paraphrases, “ was again fulfilled ;” some other commentators say, it “ was twice fulfilled,” in the transaction of Isaac, and at the previous period to which the quotation refers. These comments are, however, hasty, darken the argument of St. James,

and have, indeed, no discernible meaning at all. For, do they mean that Abraham was twice justified, in the sense of being twice pardoned; or that his justification was begun at one of the periods referred to, and finished twenty-five years afterwards? These are absurdities; and if they will not maintain them, in what sense do they understand St. James to use the phrase, "and the scripture was fulfilled?" The scripture alluded to by St. James, is that given above: "And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." When was the first fulfilment of this scripture, of which they speak? It could not be in the transaction of Abraham's proper justification through his faith in the promise respecting "his seed," as mentioned Genesis xv. 6; for that scripture is an historical narration of the fact of that, his justification. The fact, then, was not a fulfilment of that part of Scripture, but that part of Scripture a subsequent narration of the fact. The only fulfilment, consequently, that it had, was in the transaction adduced by St. James, the offering of Isaac; but if Abraham had been, in the proper sense, justified then, that event could be no fulfilment, in their sense, of a scripture which is a narrative of what was done twenty-five years before, and which relates only to what God then did, namely, count the faith of Abraham to him for righteousness. The only senses in which the term "fulfil" can be taken in this passage are, that of accomplishment, or that of illustration and establishment. The first cannot apply here, for the passage is neither typical nor prophetic; and we are left, therefore, to the second,— "And the scripture was fulfilled," illustrated and confirmed, "which saith, Abraham believed in God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." It was established and confirmed that he was, in truth, a man truly justified of God, and that the faith by which he was justified was living and operative.

5. As St. James does not use the term "justification" in the sense of the forgiveness of sin, when he speaks of the justification of Abraham by works, so neither can he use it in this sense in the general conclusion which he draws from it: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by



faith only." The ground on which he rests this general inference is the declarative justification of Abraham, which resulted from his lofty act of obedience in the case of Isaac, and which was eminently itself an act of obedient faith; and the justification of which he speaks, in the general conclusion of the argument, must, therefore, be taken in the same sense. He speaks not of the act of being justified before God, and the means by which it is effected; but of being proved to be in a manifest and scripturally approved state of justification. "Ye see then that by works a man is" shown to be in a "justified" state; or how his profession of being in the divine favour is justified and confirmed "by works, and not by faith only," or mere doctrinal faith; not by the faith of mere intellectual assent, not by the faith which is dead, and unproductive of good works.

Lastly. So far are the two Apostles from being in opposition to each other, that, as to faith as well as works, they most perfectly agree. St. James declares, that no man can be saved by mere faith. But then, by "faith" he means not the same faith to which St. Paul attributes a saving efficacy. His argument sufficiently shows this. He speaks of a faith which is "alone" and "dead;" St. Paul, of the faith which is never alone, though it alone justifieth; which is not *solitaria*, although it is *sola*, in this work, as our old Divines speak; the faith of a penitent, humbled man, who not only yields speculative assent to the scheme of Gospel doctrine, but flies with confidence to Christ, as his Sacrifice and Redeemer, for pardon of sin and deliverance from it; the faith, in a word, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and that by which a true believer enters into and lives the spiritual life, because it vitally unites him to Christ, the Fountain of that life: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

There is, then, no foundation in the Epistle of St. James for the doctrine of justification by works, according to Bishop Bull's theory. The other arguments by which this notion has been supported, are refuted by the principles that have been already laid down and confirmed.



A third theory has, also, had a great influence in the Church of England, and is to this day explicitly asserted by some of its leading Divines and Prelates. It acknowledges that, provided faith be understood to be sincere and genuine, men are justified by faith only, and in this they reject the opinion just examined; but then they take faith to be mere belief, assent to the truth of the Gospel, and nothing more. This is largely defended by Whitby, in his preface to the Galatians, which, in other respects, ably shows that justification is in no sense by works, either natural, Mosaic, or evangelical. The faith by which we are justified, he describes to be "a full assent to, or firm persuasion of mind concerning, the truth of what is testified by God himself respecting our Lord Jesus Christ," and in particular, "that he was Christ the Son of God." "This was the faith which the Apostles required in order to baptism;" "by this faith men were put into the way of salvation, and, if they persevered in it, would obtain it."

Nearly the same view is taught by the late Bishop of Winchester, in his *Refutation of Calvinism*, and his *Elements of Theology*; and it is, probably, the opinion of the great body of the national Clergy, not distinguished as evangelical, though with many it is also much mingled with the scheme of Bishop Bull. "Faith and belief," says Bishop Tomline, "strictly speaking, mean the same thing." If, then, a penitent Heathen or Jew, convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised Saviour of the world, "having understood that baptism was essential to the blessings of the new and merciful dispensation, of the divine authority of which he was fully persuaded, would eagerly apply to some one of those who were commissioned to baptize; his baptism, administered according to the appointed form, to a true believer, would convey justification; or, in other words, the baptized person would receive remission of his past sins, would be reconciled to God, and be accounted just and righteous in his sight."\* "Faith, therefore, including repentance for former offences, was, as far as the person himself was concerned, the sole requisite for justifi-

\* *Refutation of Calvinism*, chap. iii.

cation; no previous work was enjoined; but baptism was invariably the instrument, or external form, by which justification was conveyed."\*

The confusedness and contrariety of this scheme will be obvious to the reader.

It will not be denied to Dr. Whitby, that the Apostles baptized upon the profession of a belief in the Messiahship and Sonship of our Lord; nor is it denied to Bishop Tomline, that when baptism, in the case of true penitents, was not only an outward expression of the faith of assent, but accompanied by a solemn committal of the spiritual interests of the baptized to Christ, by an act of confidence, (the power to do which was, no doubt, often given as a part of the grace of baptism,) justification would follow;—the real question is, whether justification follows mere assent. This is wholly contradicted by the argument of St. James; for if "dead faith," by which he means mere assent to doctrine, is no evidence of a justified state, it cannot be justifying; which I take to be as conclusive an argument as possible. For St. James does not deny faith to him who has faith without works; if, then, he has faith, the Apostle can mean by "faith" nothing else, certainly, but assent or belief: "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well;" and as this faith, according to him, is "alone," by "faith" he means mere assent of the intellect. This argument shows, that those theologians are unquestionably in error, who make justification the result of mere assent to the evidence of the truth of the Gospel, or doctrinal belief. And neither Dr. Whitby nor Bishop Tomline is able to carry this doctrine throughout. The former contends, that this assent, when firm and sincere, must produce obedience; but St. James denies neither firmness of conviction nor sincerity to his inoperative faith, and yet he tells us, that it remained "alone," and was "dead." Besides, if faith justifies only as it produces obedience, it does not justify alone, and the justifying efficacy lies in the virtual or actual obedience proceeding from it, which gives up Whitby's main position, and goes into the scheme

of Bishop Bull. Equally inconsistent is Bishop Tomline: He acknowledges that "belief, or faith, may exist, unaccompanied by any of the Christian graces;" and that "this faith does not justify." How, then, will he maintain that justification is by faith alone, in the sense of belief? Again: He tells us, that the faith which is the means of salvation "is that belief of the truth of the Gospel which produces obedience to its precepts, and is accompanied by a firm reliance upon the merits of Christ;" still further, that "baptism is the instrument invariably by which justification is conveyed."\* Thus, then, we are first told, that justifying faith is belief or assent; then, that various other things are connected with it to render it justifying, such as previous repentance, the power of producing obedience, reliance on the merits of Christ, and baptism! All this confusion and contradiction shows, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in the sense of belief or intellectual assent only, cannot be maintained; and that, in order to avoid the worse than Antinomian consequence which would follow from the doctrine, its advocates are obliged so to explain, and qualify, and add, as to make many approaches to that true doctrine against which they hurl both censure and ridicule.

The error of this whole scheme lies in not considering the essence of justifying faith to be trust or confidence in Christ as our sacrifice for sin, which, though Whitby and others of his school have attempted to ridicule, by calling it "a leaning or rolling of ourselves upon him for salvation," availing themselves of the coarse terms used by scoffers, is yet most manifestly, as we have indeed already seen, the only sense in which faith can be rationally taken when a sacrifice for sin, a means of reconciliation with God, is its object, and indeed when any promise of God is made to us. It is not surely that we may merely believe that the death of Christ is a sacrifice for sin, that he is "set forth as a propitiation," but that we may trust in its efficacy; it is not that we may merely believe that God has made promises to us, that his

\* Refutation of Calvinism, chap. iii.

merciful engagements in our favour are recorded ; but that we may have confidence in them, and thus be supported by them. This was the faith of the saints of the Old Testament : “ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” His faith was confidence. “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” “ Who is among you that feareth the Lord ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” “ Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” It is under this notion of trust that faith is continually represented to us also in the New Testament : “ In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” “ For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of them that believe.” “ For I know whom I have believed,” (trusted,) “ and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” “ If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

The fourth theory which we may notice, is that which rejects justification in the present life, and defers its administration to the last day. This has had a few, and but a few, abettors ; and the principal arguments for it are, 1. That all the consequences of sin are not removed from even believers in the present life ; whereas a full remission of sin necessarily implies the full and immediate remission of punishment. 2. That if believers are justified, that is, judged in the present life, they must be judged twice ; whereas there is but one judgment, which is to take place at Christ’s second coming. 3. That the Scriptures speak of justification at the last day, as when our Lord declares that “ every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment ;” and adds, “ By thy words thou shalt” (then) “ be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.”

To all these arguments, which a few words will refute, the general and, indeed, sufficient answer is, that justification in the sense of the forgiveness of sins, the only import of the



term in question, is constantly and explicitly spoken of as a present attainment. This is declared to be the case with Abraham and with David, by St. Paul; it was surely the case with those to whom our Lord said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" and with her of whom he declared, that having "much forgiven, she loved much." "We have," says St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." So plain a point needs no confirmation by more numerous quotations; and the only means which the advocates of the theory have resorted to for explaining such passages consistently with their own views, is absurdly, and we may add audaciously, to resolve them into a figure of speech which speaks of a future thing, when certain, as present; a mode of interpretation which sets all criticism at defiance.

As to the first argument, we may observe that it assumes it to be essential to the pardon of sin, that all its consequences should be immediately removed, or otherwise, they assert, it is no pardon at all. This is to affirm, that to be freed from punishment in another life, and finally, and indeed in a short time, to be freed from the afflictions of this, is not a pardon; which no one can surely deliberately affirm. This notion, also, loses sight entirely of the obviously wise ends which are answered by postponing the removal of affliction and diseases from those who are admitted into the divine favour, till another life; and of the sanctification of all these to their benefit, so that they entirely lose, when they are not the consequence of new offences, their penal character, and become parts of a merciful discipline, "working together for good."

The second argument assumes, that, because there is but one general judgment, there can be no acts of judgment which are private and personal. But the one is in no sense contrary to the other. Justification may, therefore, be allowed to be a judicial proceeding under a merciful constitution, as before explained, and yet offer no obstruction to a general, public, and final judgment. The latter, indeed, grows out of the former; for since this offer of mercy is made to all men

by the Gospel, they are accountable for the acceptance or refusal of it, which it is a part of the general judgment to exhibit, that the righteousness of God, in the punishment of them "that believe not the Gospel," may be demonstrated, and that the ground of the salvation of those who have been sinners, as well as the rest of mankind, may be declared. We may also further observe, that so far is the appointment of one general judgment from interfering with acts of judgment in the proceedings of the Most High as the Governor of men, that he is constantly judging men, both as individuals and nations, and distributing to them both rewards and punishments.

The argument from the justification of men at the last day proceeds, also, upon a false assumption. It takes justification then and now for the same act; and it supposes it to proceed upon the same principle; neither of which is true.

1. It is not true that it is the same act. The justification of believers in this life is the remission of sins; but where are we taught that remission of sins is to be attained in the day of judgment? Plainly nowhere, and the whole doctrine of Scripture is in opposition to this notion; for it confines our preparation for judgment to the present life only. When our Lord says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified," he does not mean, "By thy words thy sins shall be forgiven;" and if this is not maintained, the passage is of no force in the argument.

2. Justification at the last day does not proceed upon the same principle, and, therefore, is not to be concluded to be the continuance of the same act, commenced on earth. Justification at the last day is, on all hands, allowed to be by works; but, if that justification mean the pardon of sin, then the pardon of sin is by works and not by faith,—a doctrine we have already refuted from the clear evidence of Scripture itself. The justification of the last day is, therefore, not the pardon of sin; for if our sins are previously pardoned, we then need no pardon; if they are not pardoned, no provision for their remission then remains. And as this justification is not pardon, neither is it acquittal; for, as to those sins of

which the wicked have not been guilty, they will not be acquitted of them, because an all-wise God will not charge them with those of which they have not been guilty, and there can be no acquittal as to those they have committed. Believers will not be acquitted of the sins for which they have obtained forgiveness, because they will not be charged upon them. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." So far from their being arraigned as sinners, that their justification on earth may be formally pleaded for their acquittal at the last day, the very circumstances of the judgment will be a public recognition, from its very commencement, of their pardon and acceptance upon earth. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "They rise to glory, and not to shame," their bodies being made like unto Christ's "glorious body." Those that sleep in Christ shall "God bring with him," in his train of triumph; they shall be set on his "right hand," in token of acceptance and favour; and of the books which shall be opened, one is "the book of life," in which their names have been previously recorded. It follows, then, that our justification at the last day, if we must still use that phrase, which has little to support it in Scripture, and might be well substituted for others less equivocal, can only be declarative, approbatory, and remunerative: Declarative, as recognising, in the manner just stated, the justification of believers on earth; approbatory of their works of faith and love; and remunerative of them, as made graciously rewardable, in their different measures, by the evangelical constitution.

And here it may not be amiss to notice an argument against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and in favour of justification by faith and works, which is drawn from the proceedings of the last day: "If works wrought through faith are the ground of the sentence passed upon us in that day, then they are a necessary condition of our justification." This is an argument which has been built much upon, from Bishop Bull to the present day. Its fallacy lies in considering the works of believers as the only or chief ground of that sentence; that is, the administration of eternal



life to them, in its different degrees of glory, at the coming of Christ. That it is not so, is plain from those express passages of Scripture which represent eternal life as the fruit of Christ's atonement, and the gift of God through him. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works," &c. "Why," says an old writer, "might he not have said, 'By grace are ye saved through faith and works?' It were as easy to say the one as the other."\* If our works are the sole ground of that sentence of eternal life, then is the reward of righteousness of debt according to the law of works, and not of grace; but if of grace, then works are not the sole or chief ground of our final reward. If of debt, we claim in our own right, and the works rewarded must be, in every sense, our own; but good works are not our own works; we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and derive all the power to do them from Him. If, then, we have not the right of reward in ourselves, we have it in another; and thus we again come to another and higher ground of the final sentence than the works wrought even by them that believe, namely, the covenant-right which we derive from Christ, right grounded on promise. If, then, it is asked, "In what sense are good works any ground at all of the final sentence of eternal life?" we answer, They are so secondarily and subordinately, 1. As evidences of that faith and that justified state from which alone truly good works can spring. 2. As qualifying us for heaven; they and the principles from which they spring constituting our holiness, our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." 3. As rewardable; but still of grace, not of debt; of promise, not of our own right; since, after all we have done,

\* The reader will also recollect Rom. vi. 23: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The following passages expressly make the atonement of Christ the ground of our title to eternal life: "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that, by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." (Heb. ix. 12, 15.) "Christ died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thess. v. 9, 10.)



though we had lived and suffered as the Apostles to whom the words were first addressed, we are commanded to confess ourselves "unprofitable servants." In this sense good works, though they have no part in the office of justifying the ungodly, that is, in obtaining forgiveness of sin, are necessary to salvation, though they are not the ground of it. As they are pleasing to God, so are they approved and rewarded by God. "They prevent future guilt, but take away no former guilt; evidence our faith and title to everlasting glory, strengthen our union with Christ, because they strengthen faith, confirm our hope, glorify God, give good example to men, make us more capable of communion with God, give some content to our consciences, and there is happiness in the doing of them, and in the remembrance of them when done. Blessed are they who always abound in them; for they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. Yet Bellarmine, though a great advancer of merit, thought it the safest way to put our sole trust, not in these good works, but in Christ. It is, indeed, not only the safest, but the only way, so to do, if we would be justified before God. True, we shall be judged according to our works; but it doth not follow that we shall be justified by our works. God did never ordain good works, which are the fruits of a sincere faith in Christ, to acquire a right unto the remission of sin and eternal life; but to be a means by which we may obtain possession of the rewards he hath promised."\*

The last theory of justification to which it is necessary to advert, is that comprised in the scheme of Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, in his *Key to the Apostolic Writings*. It is, that all such phrases as "to elect," "call," "adopt," "justify," "sanctify," &c., are to be taken to express that church-relation into which, by the destruction of the Jewish polity, believing Jews and Gentiles were brought; that they are "antecedent blessings," enjoyed by all professed Christians, though, unless they avail themselves of these privileges for the purposes of personal holiness, they cannot be saved.

\* *Lawson's Theo-Politica.*

This scheme is, in many respects, delusive and absurd, as it confounds collective privileges with those attainments which, from their nature, can only be personal. If we allow this with respect to "election," for instance, it may have a plausibility, because nations of men may be elected to peculiar privileges of a religious kind; yet with respect to the others, as "justification," &c., the notion requires no lengthened refutation. Justification is, as the Apostle Paul states it, pardon of sin; but are the sins of nations pardoned because they are professedly Christian? This is a personal attainment, and can be no other; and collective justification, by church privileges, is a wild dream, which mocks and trifles with the Scriptures. According to this scheme, there is a scriptural sense in which the most profane and immoral man, provided he profess himself a Christian, may be said to be justified or pardoned; sanctified, or made holy; and adopted, or made a child of God.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *Benefits derived to Man from the Atonement :—Concomitants of Justification.*

THE leading blessings concomitant with justification, are regeneration and adoption ; \* with respect to which we may observe generally, that, although we must distinguish them as being different from each other, and from justification, yet they are not to be separated. They occur at the same time, and they all enter into the experience of the same person ; so that no man is justified without being regenerated and adopted, and no man is regenerated and made a son of God, who is not justified. Whenever they are mentioned in Scripture, they therefore involve and imply each other ; a remark which may preserve us from some errors. Thus, with respect to our heirship, and consequent title to eternal life, in Titus iii. 7, it is grounded upon our justification : For we are “justified by his grace, that we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” In 1 Peter i. 3, it is connected with our regeneration : “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively

\* Mr. Watson has fallen into a slight inaccuracy, in placing adoption after regeneration ; for though these blessings are “concomitant” with justification, and therefore cannot be either separated from it, or from each other, yet his own able reasoning upon the witness of the Spirit contained in this very chapter, proves that, in the order of nature, adoption must precede regeneration. The witness of the Spirit, which is direct and immediate, is the witness of the believer’s personal adoption. From that witness there arises in the heart, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, a grateful and filial love to God in return ; and this love to him, as the God of mercy and salvation, reconciled in Jesus Christ, is the principle of all holiness, the most distinct and prominent feature of the new nature. If, then, the witness of adoption precedes the renewal of the heart, and is, in fact, the means by which the Holy Spirit produces that renewal, adoption itself must of necessity precede it. See also the valuable papers on the witness of the Spirit, Vol. viii. —EDIT.

hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance," &c. Again, in Rom. viii. 17, it is grounded upon our adoption: "If children, then heirs." These passages are a sufficient proof, that justification, regeneration, and adoption are not distinct and different titles, but constitute one and the same title, through the gift of God in Christ, to the heavenly inheritance. They are attained, too, by the same faith. We are "justified by faith;" and we are the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Accordingly, in the following passages, they are all united as the effect of the same act of faith: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," (which appellation includes reconciliation and adoption,) "even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" or, in other words, were regenerated.

The observations which have been made on the subject, in the preceding chapter, will render it the less necessary to dwell here at length upon the nature and extent of regeneration.

It is that mighty change in man, wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which the dominion which sin has over him in his natural state, and which he deplores and struggles against in his penitent state, is broken and abolished, so that, with full choice of will and the energy of right affections, he serves God freely, and "runs in the way of his commandments." "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the power and the will to do all things which are pleasing to God, both as to inward habits and outward acts, are, therefore, the distinctive characters of this state.

That repentance is not regeneration, we have before observed. It will not bear disputing whether regeneration begins with repentance; for if the regenerate state is only entered upon at



our justification, then all that can be meant by this, to be consistent with the Scriptures, is, that the preparatory process which leads to regeneration, as it leads to pardon, commences with conviction and contrition, and goes on to a repentant turning to the Lord. In the order which God has established, regeneration does not take place without this process. Conviction of the evil and danger of an unregenerate state must first be felt. God hath appointed this change to be effected in answer to our prayers; and acceptable prayer supposes that we desire the blessing we ask; that we accept of Christ as the appointed medium of access to God; that we feel and confess our own inability to attain what we ask from another; and that we exercise faith in the promises of God, which convey the good we seek. It is clear that none of these is regeneration; for they all suppose it to be a good in prospect, the object of prayer and eager desire. True it is, that deep and serious conviction of sin, the power to desire deliverance from it, the power to pray, the struggle against the corruptions of an unregenerate heart, are all proofs of a work of God in the heart, and of an important moral change; but it is not this change, because regeneration is that renewal of our nature which gives us dominion over sin, and enables us to serve God from love, and not merely from fear; and it is yet confessedly unattained, being still the object of search and earnest desire. We are not yet "created anew unto good works," which is as special and instant a work of God as justification; and for this reason, that it is not attained before the pardon of our sins, and always accompanies it.

This last point may be proved,

1. From the nature of justification itself; which takes away the penalty of sin; but that penalty is not only obligation to punishment, but the loss of the sanctifying Spirit, and the curse of being left under the slavery of sin, and under the dominion of Satan. Regeneration is effected by this Spirit restored to us, and is a consequence of our pardon; for though justification in itself is the remission of sin, yet a justified state implies a change both in our condition and in our disposition: In our condition,

as we are in a state of life, not of death ; of safety, not of condemnation ;—in our disposition, as regenerate and new creatures.

2. From Scripture ; which affords us direct proof that regeneration is a concomitant of justification : “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” It is therefore the result of our entrance into that state in which we are said to be “ in Christ ;” and the meaning of this phrase is most satisfactorily explained by Rom. viii. 1, considered in connexion with the preceding chapter, from which, in the division of the chapters, it ought not to have been separated. The seventh chapter clearly describes the state of a person convinced and slain by the law applied by the Spirit. We may discover, indeed, in this description, certain moral changes ; as, consenting to the law that it is good ; delighting in it after the inward man ; powerful desires ; humble confession, &c. The state represented is, however, in fact, one of guilt, spiritual captivity, helplessness, and misery ; a state of condemnation ; and a state of bondage to sin. The opposite condition is that of a man “ in Christ Jesus :” To him “ there is no condemnation ;” he is forgiven ; the bondage to sin is broken ; he “ walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” To be “ in Christ,” is, therefore, to be justified ; and regeneration instantly follows. We see, then, the order of the divine operation in individual experience : Conviction of sin, helplessness and danger ; faith ; justification ; and regeneration. The regenerate state is also called in Scripture “ sanctification ;” though a distinction is made by the Apostle Paul between that and being “ sanctified wholly,”—a doctrine to be afterward considered. In this regenerate or sanctified state, the former corruptions of the heart may remain, and strive for the mastery ; but that which characterizes and distinguishes it from the state of a penitent before justification, before he is “ in Christ,” is, that they are not even his inward habit ; and that they have no dominion. Faith unites to Christ ; by it we derive “ grace and peace from God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ,” and enjoy “ the communion of the Holy Ghost ;” and this Spirit, as the sanctifying Spirit, is given to us “ to abide with

us, and to be in us," and then we "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Adoption is the second concomitant of justification, and is a large and comprehensive blessing.

To suppose that the Apostles take this term from the practice of the Greeks, Romans, and other nations who had the custom of adopting the children of others, and investing them with all the privileges of their natural offspring, is, probably, a refinement. It is much more likely, that they had simply in view the obvious fact, that our sins had deprived us of our sonship, the favour of God, and our right to the inheritance of eternal life; that we had become strangers, and aliens, and enemies; and that, upon our return to God, and reconciliation with him, our forfeited privileges were not only restored, but heightened, through the paternal love of God. They could scarcely be forgetful of the affecting parable of the prodigal son; and it is under the same simple view that St. Paul quotes from the Old Testament, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Adoption, then, is that act by which we who were alienated, and enemies, and disinherited, are made the sons of God, and heirs of his eternal glory. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;" where it is to be remarked, that it is not in our own right, nor in right of any work done in us, or which we ourselves do, though it be an evangelical work, that we become heirs, but jointly with him, and in his right.

To this state belong freedom from a servile spirit,—we are not servants, but sons; the special love and care of God our heavenly Father; a filial confidence in him; free access to him at all times and in all circumstances; the title to the heavenly inheritance; and the Spirit of adoption, or the witness of the Holy Spirit to our adoption, which is the foundation of all the comfort we can derive from those privileges, as it is the only means by which we can know that they are ours.



The point stated last requires to be explained more largely ; and the more so, as it has often been derided as enthusiastic, and often timidly explained away by those whose opinions are in the main correct.

The doctrine is, the inward witness or testimony of the Holy Spirit to the adoption or sonship of believers, from which flows a comfortable persuasion or conviction of our present acceptance with God, and the hope of our future and eternal glory.

This is taught in several passages of Scripture :—

“ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” (Rom. viii. 15, 16.) In this passage it is to be remarked, 1. That the gift of the Spirit spoken of, takes away “ fear,” being opposed to the personified spirit of the law, or, rather, perhaps, to the Holy Spirit in his convincing agency, called the Spirit of bondage, producing “ fear,” a servile dread of God as offended. 2. That the “ Spirit of God ” here mentioned is not the personified spirit or genius of the Gospel, as some would have it, but “ the Spirit itself,” or himself, and hence called in the Epistle to the Galatians, in the text adduced below, “ the Spirit of his Son,” which cannot mean the genius of the Gospel. 3. That he inspires a filial confidence in God as our Father, which is opposed to the “ fear ” produced by “ the spirit of bondage.” 4. That he produces this filial confidence, and enables us to call God our Father, by witnessing, bearing testimony, with our spirit, “ that we are the children of God.”

“ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Gal. iv. 4—6.)

Here, also, are to be noted, 1. The means of our redemption from under (the curse of) the law, the incarnation and sufferings of Christ. 2. That the adoption of sons follows upon



our actual redemption from that curse, or, in other words, our pardon. 3. That upon our pardon, “the Spirit of his Son” is “sent forth,” and that “into our hearts,” producing the same effect as that mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, filial confidence in God,—“crying, Abba, Father.” To these are to be added all those passages, so numerous in the New Testament, which express the confidence and the joy of Christians ; their friendship with God ; their confident access to him as their God ; their entire union, and delightful intercourse, with him in spirit.

This doctrine has been generally termed “the doctrine of assurance ;” and perhaps the expression of St. Paul, “the full assurance of faith,” and “the full assurance of hope,” may warrant the use of the word. But as there is a current and generally understood sense of this term among persons of the Calvinistic persuasion, implying, that the assurance of our present acceptance and sonship is an assurance of our final perseverance, and of our indefeisible title to heaven ; the phrase, “a comfortable persuasion, or conviction, of our justification and adoption,” arising out of the Spirit’s inward and direct testimony, is to be preferred : For this has been held as an indubitable doctrine of holy writ by Christians, who by no means receive the doctrine of assurance in the sense held by the followers of Calvin.

There is, also, another reason for the sparing and cautious use of the term “assurance,” which is, that it seems to imply, though not necessarily, the absence of all doubt, and shuts out all those lower degrees of persuasion which may exist in the experience of Christians. For, as our faith may not at first, or at all times, be equally strong, the testimony of the Spirit may have its degrees of strength, and our persuasion or conviction be proportionately regulated. Yet, if faith be genuine, God respects its weaker exercises, and encourages its growth, by affording measures of comfort, and degrees of this testimony. Nevertheless, whilst this is allowed, the fulness of this attainment is to be pressed upon every one that believes, according to the word of God : “Let us draw near,” says St. Paul to all Christians, “with full assurance of faith.”

It may serve, also, to remove an objection sometimes made to the doctrine, and to correct an error which sometimes pervades the statement of it, to observe that this assurance, persuasion, or conviction, whichever term be adopted, is not of the essence of justifying faith; that is, that justifying faith does not consist in the assurance that I am now forgiven, through Christ. This would be obviously contradictory. For we must believe before we can be justified; much more before we can be assured, in any degree, that we are justified; and this persuasion, therefore, follows justification, and is one of its results. We believe in order to justification; but we cannot be persuaded of our forgiveness in order to it, for the persuasion would be false. But though we must not only distinguish, but separate, this persuasion of our acceptance from the faith which justifies, we must not separate, but only distinguish, it from justification itself. With that come, as concomitants, regeneration, adoption, and, as far as we have any information from Scripture, the "Spirit of adoption," though, as in all other cases, in various degrees of operation.

On the subject of this testimony of the Holy Spirit, there are four opinions:—

The first is, that it is twofold; a direct testimony to, or "inward impression on, the soul, whereby the Spirit of God witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that I, even I, am reconciled to God;"\* and an indirect testimony, arising from the work of the Spirit in the heart and life, which St. Paul calls the testimony of our own spirits; for this is inferred from the expression, "And the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit," &c. This testimony of our own spirit, or indirect testimony of the Holy Spirit, by and through our own spirit, is considered as confirmatory of the first testimony, and is thus explained by the same writer: "How am I assured, that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit? Even by the testimony of my own spirit, 'by the answer of a good conscience towards God:' Hereby you shall know that you are

in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit ruling in the heart, are love, joy, peace, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering. And the outward fruits are, the doing good to all men, and a uniform obedience to all the commands of God."

The second opinion acknowledges, also, a twofold witness ; "the witness of the Spirit," which consists in the moral effects produced in him that believes, otherwise called "the fruits of the Spirit ;" and "the witness of our own spirits," that is, the consciousness of possessing faith. This they call "the reflex act of faith, by which a person, conscious of believing, reasons in this manner, 'I know that I believe in Christ, therefore I know that I shall obtain everlasting life.'"\*

The third opinion is, that there is but one witness, the Holy Spirit, acting concurrently with our own spirits. "The Spirit of God produces those graces in us which are the evidence of our adoption ; it is He who, as occasion requires, illuminates our understandings and assists our memories in discovering and recollecting those arguments of hope and comfort within ourselves. But God's Spirit doth witness with, not without, our spirits and understandings ; in making use of our reason in considering and reflecting upon those grounds of comfort, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in us, and from them drawing this comfortable conclusion to ourselves, that 'we are the sons of God.'"<sup>†</sup> With this notion is generally connected, that of the entire imperceptibility of the Spirit's operations as distinguished from the operations of our own mind, "so that we could never have known, unless it had been communicated to us by divine revelation, that our souls are moved by a divine power, when we love God, and keep his commandments."<sup>‡</sup>

The following passage from the Rev. Thomas Scott's Commentary agrees with Bishop Bull, in making the witness of the Spirit mediate through our own spirit ; and differs chiefly

\* Dr. Hill's Lectures.

† Bishop Bull.

‡ Mant and D'Oyly's Commentary.

in phraseology. It may be taken as the view of a great part of those called "the evangelical Clergy" of the present day. "The Holy Spirit, by producing in believers the tempers and affections of children, as described in the Scriptures, most manifestly attests their adoption into God's family. This is not done by any voice, immediate revelation, or impulse, or merely by any text brought to the mind, (for all these are equivocal and delusory,) but by coinciding with the testimony of their own consciences, as to their embracing the Gospel, and giving themselves up to the service of God. So that, whilst they are examining themselves as to the reality of their conversion, and find scriptural evidence of it, the Holy Spirit, from time to time, shines upon his own work, excites their holy affections into lively exercise, renders them very efficacious upon their conduct, and thus puts the matter beyond doubt; for while they feel the Spirit of dutiful children towards God, they become satisfied concerning his paternal love to them."

A fourth opinion allows the direct witness of the Spirit, as stated above; but considers it only the special privilege of a few favoured persons; of which notion it is a sufficient refutation, that the Apostle, in the texts before quoted, speaks generally of believers, and restrains not the attainment from any who seek it. He places it in this respect on the ground of all other blessings of the new covenant.

Of the four opinions just adduced, the first only appears to express the true sense of the word of God; but that the subject may be fully exhibited, we may observe, 1. That by all sober Divines it is allowed, that some comfortable persuasion, or, at least, hope of the divine favour, is attainable by true Christians, and is actually possessed by them, except under the influence of bodily infirmities, and in peculiar seasons of temptation; and that all true faith is, in some degree, (though to what extent men differ in opinion,) personal and appropriating.

"The third part of repentance is faith, whereby we do apprehend and take hold upon the promises of God, touching the free pardon and forgiveness of our sins; which promises are sealed up unto us, with the death and blood-shedding



of his Son Jesus Christ. For what should it avail and profit us to be sorry for our sins, to lament and bewail that we have offended our most bounteous and merciful Father, or to confess and acknowledge our offences and trespasses, though it be done never so earnestly, unless we do steadfastly believe, and be fully persuaded, that God, for his Son Jesus Christ's sake, will forgive us all our sins, and put them out of remembrance and from his sight? Therefore they that teach repentance without a lively faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ, do teach none other but Judas's repentance."\*

"Faith is not merely a speculative but a practical acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ,—an effort and motion of the mind towards God; when the sinner, convinced of sin, accepts with thankfulness the proffered terms of pardon, and in humble confidence applying individually to himself the benefit of the general atonement, in the elevated language of a venerable father of the Church, drinks of the stream which flows from the Redeemer's side. The effect is, that in a little while, he is filled with that perfect love of God which casteth out fear,—he cleaves to God with the entire affection of the soul."†

"It is the property of saving faith, that it hath a force to appropriate, and make Christ our own. Without this, a general remote belief would have been cold comfort. 'He loved me, and gave himself for me,' saith St. Paul. What saith St. Chrysostom? 'Did Christ die only for St. Paul? No; *non excludit, sed appropriat*; he excludes not others, but he will secure himself.'"‡

2. By those who admit, that, upon previous contrition, and faith in Christ, an act of justification takes place, by which we are reconciled to God, and adopted into his family, it must also be admitted that this act of mercy on the part of God is entirely kept secret from us, or that, by some means, it is made knowable by us. If the former, there is no remedy at all for doubt, and fear, and tormenting anticipation, which must be great, in proportion as our repentance is

\* Homily on Repentance.

† Bishop Horsley.

‡ Bishop Brownrigg.

deep and genuine ; and so there can be no comfort, no freedom, no cheerfulness of spirit in religion, which contradicts the sentiments of all Churches and all their leading theologians. What is still more important, it contradicts the Scriptures.

To all true believers, the Almighty is represented as the "God of peace and consolation ;" as "a Father ;" as "dwelling in them, and walking in them." Nay, there is a marked distinction between the assurances of grace and favour made to penitents, and those made to believers. The declarations as to the former are highly consolatory ; but they constantly refer to some future good designed for them by the God before whom they humble themselves, for the encouragement of their seeking prayers and their efforts of trust. "To that man will I look," (a Hebraism for showing favour,) "saith the Lord, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit." The "weary and heavy laden" are invited to Christ, that he may give "rest unto their souls." The Apostles exhorted men to repent and be baptized, in order to the remission of sins. But to all who, in the Christian sense, are believers, or who have the faith by which we are justified, the language is much higher : "We have peace with God." "We joy in God, by whom we have received the atonement." They are exhorted "to rejoice in the Lord always." "The spirit of bondage" is exchanged for "the Spirit of adoption." They are "Christ's." They are "children, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." They "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." They are "always confident, knowing, that, whilst at home in the body, they are absent from the Lord ; but that when absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord."

3. If then we come to know that this great act of forgiveness has taken place in our favour ; that it is vouchsafed to us in particular ; and know this with that degree of conviction which lays a sufficient ground of comfort and joy, the simple question is, By what means this knowledge is attained by us ? The general promise of pardon alone is, in all the schemes just stated, acknowledged to be insufficient for this purpose ;

for since that promise is suspended upon conditions, they all profess to explain the means by which we may conclude that we are actually and personally interested in the benefit of the general promise, the conditions being on our part personally fulfilled. The first opinion attributes this to a double testimony, a direct one of the Holy Spirit to our minds, and an indirect one of the same Spirit through our own minds, and founded upon his moral work in them : Or, what is the same thing, the testimony of our own spirit. This twofold testimony we think clearly established by the texts above quoted. For the first, "the Spirit itself," and the "Spirit of his Son," is manifestly the Spirit of God : His office is to give testimony ; and the object of the testimony is to declare that we are the sons of God. When also the Apostle, in Rom. viii. 16, says that this Spirit bears witness "with" our spirit, he makes our own minds witnesses with him to the same fact, though in a different manner. For though some writers will have the compound to be used here for the simple form of the verb, and render it, "to witness to our spirit ;" and instances of this use of the compound verb do occur in the New Testament ; yet it agrees both with the literal rendering of the word, and with other passages, to conjoin this testimony of the Holy Spirit with those confirmatory proofs of our adoption which arise from his work within us, and which may, upon examination of our state, be called "the testimony of our own mind or conscience." To this testimony the Apostle Paul refers in the same chapter : "They that are after the Spirit (do mind) the things of the Spirit." "But ye are not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you ; now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And again, in Galatians : "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c.

4. Two witnesses and a twofold testimony are then sufficiently obvious ; but the main consideration is, whether the Holy Spirit gives his testimony directly to the mind, by im-



pression, suggestion, or by whatever other term it may be called, or mediately by our own spirits, in some such way as is described by Bishop Bull in the extract above given ; by “illuminating our understandings and assisting our memories in discussing and recollecting those arguments of hope and comfort within ourselves,” which arise from “the graces which he has produced in us ;” or, as it is expressed by Mr. Scott, by “shining upon his own work, exciting their affections into lively exercise, rendering them very efficacious upon their conduct,” and “thus puts the matter beyond doubt ; for whilst they feel the spirit of dutiful children towards God, they become satisfied concerning his paternal love to them.”

To this statement of the doctrine we object, that it makes the **testimony** of the Holy Spirit, in point of fact, but the testimony of our own spirit ; and, by holding but one witness, contradicts St. Paul, who, as we have seen, holds two. For the testimony is that of our own consciousness of certain moral changes which have taken place ; no other is admitted ; and therefore there is but one testimony. Nor is the Holy Spirit brought in at all, except to qualify our own spirit to give witness by assisting its “discernment and memory,” according to Bishop Bull, and by “shining upon his own work,” according to Mr. Scott ; and so still there is but one witness, and that ourselves : For though another may assist a witness to prepare and arrange his evidence, there is still but one deposition, and but one deposer. This is made still stronger, since it is supposed by both these writers, that there is no impression or revelation from the Spirit of the fact of our adoption, and that he does not, in any way which we may distinguish from the operation of our own minds, assist us to prepare this evidence ; for if this assistance, or shining upon his own work, could be ascertained to be from him distinctly, and with intention to assure us from these moral changes that we are adopted into the family of God, then an immediate collateral impression or revelation would be supposed, which both reject. It follows, therefore, that we have no other ground to conclude those “graces and virtues” which we discern in ourselves to be the work of the Spirit, than the general one,—



that all good in man is of his production ; and our repentance and contrition might as well, on this general ground, be concluded to be the evidence of pardon, although they arise from our consciousness of guilt, and our need of pardon. The argument simply and in fact is, that the Holy Spirit works moral changes in the heart, and that these are the evidence of our sonship. It goes not beyond this ; the Holy Spirit is not excluded by this opinion as the source of good in man ; he is not excluded as qualifying our minds to adduce evidence as to certain changes being wrought within us ; but he is excluded as a witness, although it is said so explicitly by the Apostle that he gives witness to the fact, not of a moral change, but of our adoption.

5. But, further : Suppose our minds to be so assisted by the Holy Spirit as to discern the reality of his work in us ; and in an investigation, whether we are or are not accepted of God, pardoned by his mercy, and adopted into his family, we depose this as the evidence of it ; to what degree must this work of the Spirit in us have advanced before it can be evidence of this fact ? We have seen that it were absurd to allege contrition, and penitence, and fear, as the proofs of our pardon, since they suppose, that we are still under condemnation ; what further work of the Spirit, then, is the proof ? The reply to this usually is, that though repentance should not be evidence of pardon, yet, when faith is added, this becomes evidence, since God has declared in his word, that we are “ justified by faith,” and “ whosoever believeth shall be saved.”

To this we reply, that though we should become conscious of both repentance and faith, either by “ a reflex act of our own minds,” or by the assistance of the Spirit “ shining upon his own work,” this would be no evidence of our forgiveness ; our spirit would, in that case, witness the fact of our repenting and believing, but that would be no witness to the fact of our adoption. Justification is an act of God ; it is secret and invisible ; it passes in his own mind ; it is declared by no outward sign ; and no one can know, except the Holy Spirit, who knows the mind of God, whether we are pardoned or not, unless it had been stated in his word, that in every

case pardon is dispensed when repentance and faith have reached some definite degree, clearly pointed out, so that we cannot fail to ascertain that they have reached that degree ; and, also, unless we were expressly authorized to be ourselves the judges of this case, and confidently and comfortably to conclude our justification. For it is not enough that we have faith. Faith, both as assent and confidence, has every possible degree ; it is capable of admixture with doubt, and with self-dependence ; nor without some definite and particular characters being assigned to justifying faith, could we ever, with any confidence, conclude as to our own. But we have no such particular description of faith ; nor are we authorized, any where, to make ourselves the judges of the fact, whether the act of pardon, as to us, has passed the mind of God. The Apostle, in the passages quoted above, has assigned that office to the Holy Spirit ; but it is in no part of Scripture appointed to us.

If, then, we have no authority from God to conclude, that we are pardoned when faith, in an uncertain degree, is added to repentance, the whole becomes a matter of inference ; and we argue, that having “repentance and faith,” we are forgiven ; in other words, that these are the sufficient evidences of pardon. But repentance and faith are exercised in order to pardon ; that must, therefore, be subsequent to both, and they cannot, for that reason, be the evidence of it, or the evidence of pardon might be enjoyed before pardon is actually received, which is absurd. But it has been said, “that we have the testimony of God in his word that when repentance and faith exist, God has infallibly connected pardon with them from the moment they are perceived to exist, and so it may be surely inferred from them.” The answer is, that we have no such testimony. We have, through the mercy of God, the promise of pardon to all who repent and believe ; but repentance is not pardon, and faith is not pardon, but they are its prerequisites ; each is a *sine quâ non*, but surely not the pardon itself, nor, as we have just seen, can either be considered the evidence of pardon, without an absurdity. They are means to that end ; but nothing more : And though God has “infallibly connected” the blessing of pardon with

repentance and faith, he has not connected it with any kind of repentance, nor with any kind of faith; nor with every degree of repentance, nor with every degree of faith. How then shall we ever know, whether our repentance and faith are accepted, unless pardon actually follow them? And as this pardon cannot be attested by them, for the reason above given, and must, therefore, have an attestation of higher authority, and of a distinct kind, the only attestation conceivable which remains is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. Either this must be acknowledged, or a painful uncertainty as to the genuineness or the required measure and degree of our repentance and faith, quite destructive of "comfort," must remain throughout life.

6. But if neither our repentance, nor even a consciousness of faith, when joined with it, can be the evidence of the fact of our adoption, it has been urged, that when all those graces which are called the fruits of the Spirit are found in our experience, they, at least, must be sufficient evidence of the fact, without supposing a more direct testimony of the Holy Spirit. The "fruits" thus referred to are those enumerated by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness," &c. Two things will here be granted, and they greatly strengthen the argument for a direct testimony of the Holy Spirit; that these fruits are found only in those who have been received, by the remission of their sins, into the divine favour; and that they are fruits of the Spirit of adoption. The first is proved from the connexion of the words which follow: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh," &c. For to be "Christ's," and to be "in Christ," are phrases, with the Apostle, equivalent to being in a state of justification: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The second is proved by the connexion of the words with verse 18: "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" for these words are exactly parallel with chap. iv. 5, 6: "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba,



Father." These are, then, the fruits following upon a state of pardon, adoption, and our receiving the Spirit of adoption. We allow that they presuppose pardon; but then they as clearly presuppose the Spirit of adoption, "sent forth into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father;" that is, they not only presuppose our pardon, but pardon previously attested and made known to us; the persuasion of which conveyed to the mind, not by them, but by the Spirit of adoption, is the source of them; at least of that "love, joy, and peace," which are mentioned first, and must not be separated, in the argument, from the other. For these "fruits" cannot result from any thing but manifested pardon; they cannot themselves manifest our pardon, for they cannot exist till it is manifested. If we "love God," it is because we know him as God reconciled; if we have "joy in God," it is because we have received the reconciliation; if we have peace, it is because, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." God, conceived of as angry, cannot be the object of filial love: Pardon unfelt supposes guilt and fear still to burden the mind; and guilt, and "joy" and "peace," cannot co-exist. But by the argument of those who make these the *media* of ascertaining the fact of our forgiveness and adoption, we must be supposed to love God, whilst yet we feel him to be angry with us; to rejoice and have peace, whilst the fearful apprehensions of the consequences of unremitted sin are not removed; and if this is impossible, then the ground of our "love," and "joy," and "peace," is pardon revealed and witnessed directly and immediately by the Spirit of adoption.

It has been said, indeed, that love to God may be produced from a consideration of God's general love to mankind in his Son, and that, therefore, the force of the above argument is broken; but we reply, that, in Scripture, Christians are spoken of as reconciled to God; as "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son;" as "children," "heirs," &c.; and correspondently with these relations, their love is spoken of as love to God as their Father; love to God as their God in covenant, who calls himself "their God," and them "his people." This is the love of God exhibited in the New Testament: And the



question is, whether such a love of God as this can spring from a knowledge of his general love to man ; or whether it arises, under the Spirit's influence, from a persuasion of his pardoning love to us individually. To clear this, we may divide those who hear the Gospel, or Christians by profession, into the following classes : The carnal and careless ; the despairing ; the penitent, who seek God with hope as well as desire, now discouraged by their fears, and sunk under their load of conscious guilt, and again encouraged by a degree of hope ; and, lastly, those who are "justified by faith, and have peace with God." The first class know God's general love to man ; but it will not be pleaded that they love him. The second know the general love of God to man ; but, thinking themselves exceptions from his mercy, cannot love him on that account. The third admit the same general love of God to man, and it is the foundation of their hope ; but does this produce love ? The view of his mercy in the gift of his Son, and in the general promise, may produce a degree of this emotion, or perhaps more properly of gratitude ; but do they love his justice, under the condemnation of which they feel themselves ? and his holiness, the awful purity of which makes them afraid ? If not, they do not love God as God ; that is, as a whole, in all his perfections, the awful as well as the attractive, the alarming as well as the encouraging ; which is, doubtless, the character of the love of those who are justified by faith. But, leaving this nicer distinction, the main question is, Do they love him as a Father, as their God in covenant ; with the love which leads up the affections of "peace and joy," as well as "gentleness, goodness, and fidelity?"—for in this company, so to speak, the Apostle places this grace, where it is a "fruit of the Spirit,"—"the Spirit which they that believed on him should receive." This is impossible ; for these seeking, though hoping, penitents do not regard God as their Father, in that special sense in which the word is correlative "to children and heirs ;"—they do not regard him as their God in that covenant which says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This

is what they seek, but have not found ; and they cannot love God under relations in which they know, and painfully feel, that he does not yet stand to them. They know his general love to man, but not his pardoning love to them ; and therefore cannot love him as reconciled to them by the death of his Son. It follows, therefore, that the last class only, “the justified by faith,” bear that love to God which is marked by the characters impressed upon it by the Apostles. He is their Father, and they love him as his children : He is their God in covenant ; and, as they can, in this appropriating sense, call him their God, they love him correspondently, though not adequately. Their love, therefore, rests upon their persuasion of their personal and individual interest in his pardoning, adopting, and covenant-fulfilling mercy to them ; and where these benefits are not personally enjoyed, this kind of love to God cannot exist. This, then, we think sufficiently establishes the fact, that the Scriptures of the New Testament, when speaking of the love of believers to God, always suppose that it arises from a persuasion of God’s special love to them as individuals, and not merely from a knowledge of his general love to mankind.

Others there are who, in adverting to these fruits of the Spirit, overlook “love, joy, and peace,” and fix their attention only on “gentleness, goodness, meekness, fidelity, and temperance,” as those graces which make up our practical holiness ; and thus argue justification from regeneration, which is an unquestionable concomitant of it. The reply to this is, that the fruit of the Spirit is undivided ; that all attempts at separating it are, therefore, criminal and delusive ; and that where there is not “love, joy, and peace,” we have no scriptural reason to conclude that there is that gentleness, that goodness, that meekness, &c., of which the Apostle speaks, or, in other words, that there is that state of regeneration which the Scriptures describe ; at least, not ordinarily ; for we leave seasons of deep spiritual exercise, and cases of physical depression, to be treated according to their merits. Thus this argument falls to the ground. But the same conclusion is reached in another way. Persons of this opinion would infer forgiveness from

holiness ; but holiness consists in habits and acts of which love to God is the principle,—for we first “love God,” and then “keep his commandments.” Holiness is then preceded by love as its root, and that, as we have seen, by manifested pardon. For this love is the love of a pardoned sinner to God as a Father, as a God in actual covenant, offered on one part, and accepted on the other ; and it exists before holiness, as the principle exists before the act and the habit. In the process, then, of inferring our justified state from moral changes, if we find what we think holiness without love, it is the holiness of a Pharisee without principle. If we join to it the love which is supposed to be capable of springing from God’s general love to man, this is a principle of which the Scripture takes no cognizance ; and which at best, if it exist at all, must be a very mixed and defective sentiment, and cannot originate a holiness like that which distinguishes the “new creature.” It is not, therefore, a warrantable evidence of either regeneration or justification. But if we find love to God as a God reconciled ; as a Father ; as a God who loves us ; it is plain that, as this love is the root of holiness, it precedes it : And we must consider God under these lovely relations on some other evidence than “the testimony of our own spirits,” which evidence can be no other than that of the Spirit of God.

Thus it is established, that the witness of the Spirit is direct, and not mediate ; and the following extracts will show that this is no new or unsanctioned doctrine. Luther “was strengthened by the discourse of an old Augustine Monk, concerning the certainty we may have that our sins are forgiven. God likewise gave him much comfort in his temptations, by that saying of St. Bernard : ‘It is necessary to believe, first of all, that you cannot have forgiveness but by the mercy of God ; and next, that through his mercy thy sins are forgiven thee.’ This is the witness which the Holy Spirit bears in thy heart, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee.’ And thus it is, that, according to the Apostle, a man is justified freely through faith.”\*

\* Life of Martin Luther, by John Daniel Hermschmid.



“In the 88th Psalm is contained the prayer of one, who, although he felt in himself, that he had not only man, but also God, angry towards him; yet he by prayer humbly resorted unto God, as the only port of consolation; and, in the midst of his desperate state of trouble, put the hope of his salvation in him whom he felt his enemy. Howbeit, no man of himself can do this, but the Spirit of God that striketh man’s heart with fear, prayeth for the man stricken and feared, with unspeakable groanings. And when you feel yourself, and know any other oppressed after such sort, be glad; for after that God hath made you know what you be of yourself, he will doubtless show you comfort, and declare unto you what you be in Christ his only Son: And use prayer often, for that is the means whereby God will be sought unto for his gifts.”\*

“It is the proper effect of the blood of Christ to cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God; which if we find it doth, Christ is come to us as he is to come; and the Spirit is come, and puts his *teste*, ‘witness.’ And if we have his *teste*, we may go our way in peace; we have kept a right feast to him, and to the memory of his coming. Even so come, Lord Jesus! and come, O blessed Spirit, and bear witness to our spirit, that Christ’s water, and his blood, we have our part in both; both in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and in the blood of the New Testament, the legacy whereof is everlasting life in thy kingdom of glory.”†

“The Spirit which God hath given us to assure us that we are the sons of God, to enable us to call upon him as our Father.”‡

“Unto you, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, to the end ye might know that Christ hath built you upon a rock immovable, that he hath registered your names in the book of life.”§

“From adoption flows all Christians’ joy; for the Spirit of adoption is, first, a witness; (Rom. viii. 16;) second, a

\* Bishop Hooper. See Fox’s Acts and Monuments.

† Bishop Andrews’s Sermon of the Sending of the Holy Ghost.

‡ Hooker’s Sermon of Certainty of Faith. § Hooker’s Sermon on Jude.



seal; (Eph. iv. 30;) third, the pledge and earnest of our inheritance; (Eph. i. 14;) setting a holy security on the soul, whereby it rejoiceth, even in affliction, in hope of glory.”\*

“ This is one great office of the Holy Ghost, to ratify and seal up to us the forgiveness of our sins. ‘ In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,’ ” &c.†

“ It is the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of the adoption of sons, to create in us a sense of the paternal love of God towards us, to give us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance. ‘ The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.’ ‘ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.’ And ‘ because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.’ ‘ For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’ As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, and receive from him our regeneration, so we are also assured by the same Spirit of our adoption; and because being sons, we are also heirs, ‘ heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,’ by the same Spirit we have the pledge, or rather the earnest, of our inheritance. ‘ For he which establisheth us in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and hath given us the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts; so that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.’ ”‡

“ This is that *πνευμα υιοθεσιας*, that ‘ Spirit of adoption’ which constituteth us the sons of God, qualifying us so to be by dispositions resembling God, and filial affections towards him; certifying us that we are so, and causing us, by a free instinct, to cry, Abba, Father; running into his bosom of love, and flying under the wings of his mercy in all our needs and

\* Archbishop Usher’s Sum and Substance of Christian Religion.

† Bishop Brownrigg’s Sermon on Whitsunday.

‡ Bishop Pearson on the Creed.

distresses ; whence, ‘ as many as are led by the Spirit, they’ (saith Paul) ‘ are the sons of God, and the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.’”\*

The second testimony is that of our own spirits, “ and is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to his adopted children ; that we are inwardly conformed by the Spirit of God to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.”† But this testimony, let it be observed, is not to the fact of our adoption directly, but to the fact that we have, in truth, received the Spirit of adoption, and that we are under no delusive impressions. This will enable us to answer a common objection to the doctrine of the Spirit’s direct witness. This is, that when the evidence of a first witness must be supported by that of a second, before it can be fully relied on, it appears to be by no means of a “ decisive and satisfactory character ; and that it might be as well to have recourse at once to the evidence, which, after all, seems to sustain the main weight of the cause.” The answer to this is not difficult ; if it were, it would weigh nothing against an express text of Scripture, which speaks of the witness of the Holy Spirit and the witness of our own spirits. Both must, therefore, be concluded necessary, though we should not see their concomitancy and mutual relation. The case is not, however, involved in entire obscurity. Our own spirits can take no cognizance of the mind of God, as to our actual pardon, and can bear no witness to that fact. The Holy Spirit only, who knows the mind of God, can be this witness ; and if the fact, that God is reconciled to us, can only be known to him, by him only can it be attested to us. It cannot, therefore, be “ as well for us to have recourse at once to the evidence of our own spirits ;” because, as to this fact, our own spirits have no evidence to give. They cannot give direct evidence of it ; for we know not what passes in the mind of the invisible God : They cannot give indirect evidence of the fact ;

\* Dr. Isaac Barrow’s Sermon on the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

† Wesley’s Sermons.

for no moral changes, of which our spirits can be conscious, have been stated in Scripture as the proofs of our pardon ; they prove that there is a work of God in our hearts, but they are not proofs of our actual forgiveness. Our own spirits are competent witnesses that such moral effects have been produced in our hearts and character, as it is the office of the Holy Spirit to produce ; they prove, therefore, the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit with us and in us. That competent and infallible witness has borne his testimony that God is become our Father ; he has shed abroad his holy comfort, the comfort which arises from the sense of pardon ; and his moral operation within us, accompanying, or immediately following upon this, making us new creatures in Christ Jesus, is the proof that we are in no delusion as to the witness who gives this testimony being, in truth, the Spirit of God.

Of the four opinions on this subject entertained by Divines, the first alone is fully conformable to the Scriptures, and ought, therefore, to be believed and taught. The second opinion is refuted in our examination of the third ; for what is called “ the reflex act of faith ” is only a consciousness of believing, which we have shown must be exercised in order to pardon, but cannot be an evidence of it. The third opinion has been examined in all its parts, except the reference to “ voices and impulses,” in the quotation from Scott’s Commentary, which appears to have been thrown in *ad captandum* ; and to this we may reply, that, however the fact of his adoption is revealed to man by the Holy Spirit, it is done by his influence and inexplicable operation, producing clear satisfaction and conviction that God is reconciled, that “ our iniquities are forgiven, and our sins covered.” The fourth opinion was refuted when first stated.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### *Extent of the Atonement.*

WE have already spoken of some of the leading blessings derived to man from the death of Christ, and the conditions on which they are made attainable. Before others are considered, it may be here a proper place to inquire into the extent of that atonement for sin which was made by the death of our Saviour; and whether the blessings of justification, regeneration, and adoption, are rendered attainable by all to whom the Gospel is proclaimed.

This inquiry leads us into what is called the Calvinistic controversy; a controversy which has always been conducted with great ardour, and sometimes with intemperance. I shall endeavour to consider such parts of it as are comprehended in the question before us, with perfect calmness and fairness; recollecting, on the one hand, how many excellent and learned men have been arranged on each side; and, on the other, that, whilst all honour is due to great names, the plain and unsophisticated sense of the word of inspired truth must alone decide on a subject with respect to which it is not silent.

In the system usually called by the name of "Calvinism," and which shall subsequently be exhibited in its different modifications, there are, I think, many great errors; but they have seldom been held except in connexion with a class of vital truths. By many writers who have attacked this system, the truth which it contains, as well as the error, has often been invaded; and the assault itself has been not unfrequently conducted on principles exceedingly anti-scriptural, and fatally delusive. These considerations are sufficient to inspire caution. The controversy is a very voluminous one; and yet no great dexterity is required to exhibit it with clearness in a comparatively small compass. Its essence lies in very limited bounds;

and, according to the plan of this work, the whole question will be tested, first and chiefly, by scriptural authority. High Calvinism, indeed, affects a mode of reasoning *à priori*, and delights in metaphysics. To some, also, it gives most delight to see it opposed in the same methods; and to such disputants it will be much less imposing to resort primarily, and with all simplicity, to the testimony of the sacred writings. "It is sometimes complained," says one, "that the mind is unduly biassed in its judgment, by a continual reference to the authority of the Scriptures. The complaint is just, if the Scriptures are not the word of God; but if they are, there is an opposite and corresponding danger to be guarded against, that of suffering the mind to be unduly biassed in the study and interpretation of the revealed will of God, by the deductions of unaided reason." \*

With respect to this controversy, we may also observe, that it forms a clear case of appeal to the Scriptures; for to whom the benefits of Christ's death are extended, whether to the whole of our race, or to a part, can be matter of revelation only; and the sole province of reason is, therefore, that of interpreting with fairness, and consistently with the acknowledged principles of that revelation, those parts of it in which the subject is directly or incidentally introduced.

The question before us, put into its most simple form, is, whether our Lord Jesus Christ did so die for all men, as to make salvation attainable by all men. The affirmative of this question is, I think, the doctrine of Scripture.

It is plainly expressed,

1. In all those passages which declare that Christ died "for all men," and speak of his death as an atonement for the sins "of the whole world."

We have already seen, in treating of our Lord's atonement, in what sense the phrase, "to die for us," must be understood; that it signifies to die in the place and stead of man, as a sacrificial oblation, by which satisfaction is made for the sins of the individual, so that they become remissible upon the

terms of the evangelical covenant. When, therefore, it is said, that Christ “by the grace of God tasted death for every man;” and that “he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;” it can only be fairly concluded from such declarations, and from many other familiar texts, in which the same phraseology is employed, that, by the death of Christ, the sins of every man are rendered remissible, and that salvation is consequently attainable by every man. Again: Our Lord calls himself “the Saviour of the world;” and is, by St. Paul called “the Saviour of all men.” John the Baptist points him out as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” and our Lord himself declares, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” So, likewise, the Apostle Paul: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

2. The same doctrine is also stated in those passages which attribute an equal extent to the effects of the death of Christ as to the effects of the fall of our first parents: “For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” “Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”\*

\* To these might be added, all those passages which ascribe the abolition of bodily death to Christ, who, in this respect, repairs the effect of the transgression of Adam, which he could only do in consequence of having redeemed that body from the power of the grave. This argument may be thus stated: It is taught in Scripture, that all shall rise from the dead. It is equally clear, from the same authority, that all shall rise in consequence of the interposition of Christ, the second Adam, the Representative and Redeemer of man: “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” It follows, therefore, that if the wicked are raised from the dead, it is in consequence of the power which Christ, as Redeemer, acquired over them, and of his right in them. That this resurrection is to them a curse, was not in the purpose



As the unlimited extension of Christ's atonement to all mankind, is plainly expressed in the above-cited passages, so is it, we also assume, necessarily implied,

1. In those texts which declare that Christ died not only for those that are saved, but for those who do or may perish ; so that it cannot be argued from the actual condemnation of men, that they were excepted from many actual, and from all the offered, benefits of his death. "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." "False teachers, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." So also in the case of the apostates mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" If any dispute should here arise as to the phrase, "wherewith he was sanctified," reference may be made to chap. vi. of the same Epistle, where the same class of persons, whose doom is pronounced to be inevitable, are said to have been "once enlightened;" to have "tasted of the heavenly gift;" to have been "made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" to have "tasted the good word of God," and "the powers of the world to come;"—all which expressions show that they were placed on the same ground with other Christians as to their interest in the new covenant,—a point to which we shall again recur.

2. In all those passages which make it the duty of men to believe the Gospel, and place them under guilt, and the

of God, but arises from their wilful rejection of the Gospel. To be restored to life, is in itself a good ; that it is turned to an evil, is their own fault ; and if they are not raised from the dead in consequence of Christ's right in them, acquired by purchase, it behoves those of a different opinion to show under what other constitution than that of the Gospel, a resurrection of the body is provided for. The original law contains no intimation of this, nor of a general judgment, which latter supposes a suspension of the sentence inconsistent with the strictly legal penalty: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

penalty of death, for rejecting it. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The plain argument from all such passages is, that the Gospel is commanded to be preached to all men; that it is preached to them that they may believe in Christ, its Author; that this faith is required of them, in order to their salvation,—“that believing ye may have life through his name;” that they have power thus to believe to their salvation; (from whatever source, or by whatever means, this power is derived to them, need not now be examined; it is plainly supposed; for, not to believe is reckoned to them as a capital crime, for which they are condemned already, and reserved to final condemnation; )—and that having power to believe, they have the power to obtain salvation, which, as it can be bestowed only through the merits of Christ's sacrifice, proves that its benefit extends to them. The same conclusion, also, follows from the nature of that faith which is required by the Gospel, in order to salvation. This, we have already seen, is not mere assent to the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial death, but personal trust in it as our atonement; which those, surely, could not be required by a God of truth to exercise, if that atonement did not embrace them. Nor could they be guilty for refusing to trust in that which was never intended to be the object of their trust; for if God so designed to exclude them from Christ, he could not command them to trust in Christ; and if they are

not commanded thus to trust in Christ, they do not violate any command by not believing; and, in this respect, are innocent.

3. In all those passages in which men's failure to obtain salvation is placed to the account of their own opposing wills, and made wholly their own fault. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" "And ye will not come to me that ye may have life." "Bringing upon themselves swift destruction." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." It is useless here to multiply quotations, since the New Testament so constantly exhorts men to come to Christ, reproves them for neglect, and threatens them with the penal consequences of their own folly; thus uniformly placing the bar to their salvation, just where Christ places it in his parable of the supper, in the perverseness of those who, having been bidden to the feast, would not come. From these premises, then, it follows, that since the Scriptures always attribute the ruin of men's souls to their own will, and not to the will of God, we ought to seek for no other cause of their condemnation. We can know nothing on this subject but what God has revealed. He has declared that it is not his will that men should perish; on the contrary, "He willeth all men to be saved;" and, therefore, commands us to pray for all men. He has declared, that the reason they are not saved is, not that Christ did not die for them, but that they will not come to him for the life which he died to procure for the world; and it must, therefore, be concluded, that the sole bar to the salvation of all who are lost is in themselves, and not in any such limitation of Christ's redemption as supposes that they were not comprehended in its efficacy and intention.

It will now be necessary for us to consider what those who have adopted a different opinion have to urge against these plain and forcible declarations of Scripture. It is their burden, that they are compelled to explain these passages in a more limited and qualified sense than their literal and obvious meaning suggests; and that they must rely upon inference merely;



for it is not even pretended that there is any text whatever to be adduced, which declares, as literally, that Christ did not die for the salvation of all, as those which declare that he did so die. We have no passages, therefore, to examine, which, in their clear literal meaning, stand opposed to those which we have quoted, so as to present apparent contradictions which require to be reconciled by concession on one side or the other. This is, at least, *prima facie*, strongly in favour of those who hold that, in the same sense, and with the same design, "Jesus Christ tasted death for every man."

To our first class of texts it is objected, that the terms "all men," and "the world," are sometimes used in Scripture in a limited sense.

This may be granted, without injury to the argument drawn from the texts in question. But though in Scripture, as in common language, "all" and "every," and such universals, are occasionally used with limitation when the connexion prevents any misunderstanding; yet they are, nevertheless, strictly universal terms, and are most frequently used as such. The true question is, whether, in the places above cited, they can be understood except in the largest sense; whether "all men," and "the world," can be interpreted of the elect only, that is, of some men of all countries.

We may very confidently deny this,

1. Because the universal sense of the terms "all," and "all men," and "every man," is confirmed, either by the context of the passages in which they occur, or by other scriptures. When Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" he affirms that the iniquity of all those who have gone astray was laid on Christ. When St. Paul says, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;" he argues the universality of spiritual death, from the universality of the means adopted for raising men to spiritual life; a plain proof that it was received as an undisputed principle in the primitive church, that Christ's dying for all men was to be taken in its utmost latitude, or it could not have been made the basis of the argument. When the same Apostle calls Christ the "Saviour

of all men, and especially of those that believe," he manifestly includes both believers and unbelievers, that is, all mankind, in the term "all men;" and declares, that Christ is their Saviour, though the full benefits of his salvation are received through faith only by them that believe. When again he declares that, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men," (εἰς,) "in order to justification of life;" the force of the comparison is lost if the term "all men" is not taken in its full extent; for the Apostle is thus made to say, "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon a few men." Nor can it be objected, that the Apostle uses the terms "many," and "all men," indiscriminately in this chapter; for there is in this no contradiction, and the objection is in our favour. All men are many, though many are not in every case all. But the term "many" is taken by him in the sense of all, as appears from the following parallels: "Death passed upon all men;" "Many be dead;" "The gift by grace hath abounded unto many;" "The free gift came upon all men." "By one man's disobedience many were made" (constituted) "sinners," made liable to death; "so by the obedience of one shall many be made" (constituted) "righteous." On the last passage we may observe, that "many," or "the many," must mean "all men" in the first clause; nor is it to be restricted in the second, as though, by being "made righteous," actual personal justification were to be understood; for the Apostle is not speaking of believers individually, but of mankind collectively, and of the opposite conditions in which the race itself is placed by the offence of Adam and the obedience of Christ in all its generations.

It is equally impracticable to restrict the phrases, "the world," "the whole world;" and to paraphrase them, "the world of the elect:" And yet there is no other alternative; for either "the whole world" means those elected out of it, or else Christ died in an equal sense for every man. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. Here, if "the world" mean not the elect only, but every man, then

every man was so loved by God, that he gave his own Son for his redemption. To say that "the world," in a few places means the Roman empire, and in others Judea, is nothing to the purpose, unless it were meant to affirm, that the elect were the people of Judea, or those of the Roman empire only. It proves, it is true, a hyperbolical use of the term in both instances; but this cannot be urged in the case before us; for,

1. The elect are never called "the world" in Scripture; but are distinguished from it: "I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you."

2. The common division of mankind, in the New Testament, is only into two parts; the disciples of Christ, and the world. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own." "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

3. When the redemption of Christ is spoken of, it often includes both those who had been chosen out of the world, and those who remained still of the world. "And you hath he reconciled," says the Apostle to those that had already believed; and as to the rest, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation," plainly, that they might beseech this "world" to be reconciled to God; so that both believers and unbelievers were interested in the reconciling ministry, and the work of Christ. "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;" words cannot make the case plainer than these, since this same writer, in the same Epistle, makes it evident how he uses the term "world," when he affirms that "the world lieth in wickedness," in contradistinction to those who knew that they were of God.

4. In the general commission before quoted, the expression "world" is connected with universal terms which carry it forth into its utmost latitude of meaning. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel" (the good news) "to every creature;" and this too in order to his believing it, that he may



be saved : "He that believeth shall be saved ; and he that believeth not" (this good news preached to him that he might be saved) "shall be damned."

5. All this is confirmed by the gross absurdity of a restricted interpretation when applied to several of the foregoing passages. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." Now, if "the world" here means the elect world, or the elect not yet called out of it, then it is affirmed, that "whosoever," of this elect body, believeth shall not perish ; which plainly implies, that some of the elect might not believe, and therefore perish, contrary to their doctrine. This absurd consequence is still clearer from the verses which immediately follow : "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned : But he that believeth not is condemned already." (John iii. 17, 18.) Now here we must take the term "world," either extensively, for all mankind, or limitedly, for the elect. If the former, then all men "through him may be saved," but only through faith : He, therefore, of this world that believeth may be saved ; but he of this world "that believeth not is condemned already." The sense is here plain and consistent ; but if, on the other hand, we take "the world" to mean the elect only, then he of this elect world that believeth may be saved, and he of the elect world that "believeth not is condemned ;" so that the restricted interpretation necessarily supposes that elect persons may remain in unbelief and be lost. The same absurdity will follow from a like interpretation of the general commission. Either "all the world" and "every creature" mean every man, or the elect only : If the former, it follows, that he of this "world," any individual among those included in the phrase, "every creature," who believes, "shall be saved," or, not believing, "shall be damned : " If the latter, then he of the elect, any individual of the elect who believes, "shall be saved," and any individual of the elect who believes not, "shall be damned." Similar absurdities might be brought out from other passages ; but if these are candidly weighed, it will

abundantly appear, that texts so plain and explicit cannot be turned into such consequences by any true method of interpretation, and that they must, therefore, be taken in their obvious sense, which unequivocally expresses the universality of the atonement.

It has been urged, indeed, that our Lord himself says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 9.) But will they here interpret "the world" to be the world of the elect? If so, they cut even them off from the prayers of Christ. But if by "the world" they would have us understand the world of the non-elect, then they will find that all the prayers which our Lord puts up for those whom the Father hath given him, had this end, "that they," the non-elect world, "may believe that thou hast sent me:" (Verse 21 :) Let them choose either side of the alternative. The meaning of this passage is, however, made obvious by the context. Christ, in the former part of his intercession, as recorded in this chapter, prays exclusively, not for his church in all ages, but for his disciples then present with him; as appears plain from verse 12: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name:" But he was only with his first disciples, and for them he exclusively prays in the first instance; then, in verse 20, he prays for all who in future should believe on him through their words; and he does this in order that the world might believe. Thus "the world," in its largest sense, is not cut off, but expressly included in the benefits of this prayer.

"I lay down my life for the sheep," (John x. 15,) is also adduced, to prove that Christ died for none but his sheep. But the consequence will not hold; for there is no inconsistency between his having died for them that believe, and also for them that believe not. Christ is said to be "the Saviour of all men," and "especially of them that believe;" two propositions which the Apostle held to be perfectly consistent. The very context shows that Christ laid down his life for others besides those whom, in that passage, he calls "the sheep." The sheep here intended, as the discourse will show, were those of the Jewish "fold;" for he immediately adds,

“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold,” clearly meaning the Gentiles : “Them must I bring.” He therefore laid down his life for them also ; for the sheep in the fold, who knew his voice and followed him, and for them out of the fold, who still needed bringing in ; even for the lost, whom he came to seek and save, which is the character of all mankind : “All we like sheep have gone astray ;” and “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

A restrictive interpretation, then, of the first two classes of texts we have quoted above, may be affirmed directly to contradict the plainest declarations of God’s own word. For, it is not in that case true, that God loved “the world,” if he loved not the majority ; nor is it true, that Christ was not sent “to condemn the world,” if he was sent even to enhance its condemnation ; nor that the Gospel, as the Gospel, can be preached “to every creature,” if to the majority it cannot be preached as “good tidings of great joy.” And it is sad and doleful tidings, if the greater part of the human race are shut out from the mercies of their Creator. If, then, in this interpretation there is so palpable a contradiction of the words of inspiration itself, the system which is built upon it cannot be sustained.

As to the texts which we have urged, as necessarily implying the unrestricted extent of the death of Christ, the usual answers to those which speak of Christ having died for them that perish, may be briefly examined. “Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” (Rom. xiv. 15.) Him, says Poole,\* for whom, “in the judgment of charity,” we are to presume Christ died. To say nothing of the danger of such unlicensed paraphrases in the interpretation of Scripture, it is obvious that this exposition entirely annuls the motive by which the Apostle enforces his exhortation. Why are we not to be an occasion of sin to our brother ? The answer is, lest we “destroy him ;” and, in the parallel place, lest “he perish.” (1 Cor. viii. 11.) But what is the aggravation of the offence ? Truly that “Christ died for him ;” and so we have no tenderness for a



soul on whom Christ had so much compassion as to die for his salvation! Let the text then be tried, as paraphrased by Poole and other Calvinists: "Destroy not him, for whom, in the judgment of charity, it may be concluded, Christ died;" and it turns the motive the other way. For if I admit that none can be destroyed for whom Christ died, then, in proportion to the charity of my judgment, that any individual is of this number, I may be the less cautious of ensnaring his conscience in indifferent matters; since, at least, this is certain, that he cannot perish, and I cannot be guilty of the aggravated offence of destroying him who was an object of the compassion of Christ. Who can suppose that the Apostle would thus counteract his own design? or that he should seriously admonish his readers not to do that which was impossible, if, in fact, he taught them that Christ died only for the elect, and that they for whom he died could never perish? Another commentator, of the same school, explains this as a caution against doing that which had a "tendency to the ruin of one for whom Christ died; not that it implies, that the weak brother would actually perish."\* But in this case, also, as it is assumed that it was a doctrine taught by St. Paul, and received by the churches to whom he wrote, that the elect could not perish, the motive is taken away upon which the admonition is grounded. For if the persons, to whom the Apostle wrote, knew that the weak brother, for whom Christ died, could not perish, then nothing which they could do had any "tendency" to destroy him. It might injure him, disturb his mind, lead him into sin, destroy his comforts; all or any of which would have been appropriate motives on which to have urged the caution; but nothing can have even a tendency to "destroy" him whose salvation is fixed by an unalterable decree. Mr. Scott is, however, evidently, not satisfied with his own interpretation; and gives a painful example of the influence of a preconceived system in commenting upon Scripture, by charging the Apostle himself with careless writing: "We may, however, observe, that the Apostles did not write in that exact systematical style

which some affect; otherwise they would scrupulously have avoided such expressions." This is rather in the manner of Priestley and Belsham, than that of an orthodox commentator; but it does homage to the force of truth by turning away from it, and by tacitly acknowledging that the Scriptures cannot be Calvinistically interpreted. The same commentators, following, as they do, in the train of the Calvinistic Divines in general, may furnish, also, the answer to the argument, from 2 Peter ii. 1: "Denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction." Poole gives us three interpretations: The first is, "The Lord that bought Israel out of Egypt;" as though St. Peter could be speaking of the Mosaic, and not of the Christian, redemption; and as though the Judaizing teachers, supposing the Apostle to speak of them, denied the God of the Jews, when in truth it was their object to set up his religion against that of Christ. The second is, that "they were bought," or redeemed, by Christ, from temporal death, their lives having been spared. But we have no such doctrine in Scripture, as that the long-suffering of wicked men, procured by Christ's redemption, is unconnected in its intent with their eternal salvation. The barren fig-tree was spared at the intercession of Christ, that means might be taken with it to make it fruitful; and in this same Epistle of St. Peter, he teaches us to "account the long-suffering of the Lord salvation;" meaning, doubtless, in its tendency and intention. To this we may add, that there is nothing in the context to warrant this notion of mere temporal redemption. The third interpretation is, "that they denied the Lord whom they professed to have bought them." This also is gratuitous, and gives a very different sense from that which the words of the Apostle convey. But it is argued, that the offence would be the same in denying Christ, whether he really died for them, or that they had professed to believe he died for them. Certainly not. Their crime, as it is put by the Apostle, is not the denying of their former profession, or denying Christ, whom they formerly professed to have bought them; but denying Christ, who had so bought them, that, for this reason, they ought never to have denied him, but confessed him at the

hazard of their lives. Further: If they merely denied that which they formerly professed, namely, that Christ had bought them, and if, in point of fact, he never did buy them, they were in error when they professed to believe that he bought them, and spoke the truth only when they denied it; and if it be said, that they knew not but he had bought them, when they denied him, this might be a reason for their not being rewarded for renouncing an error, as being done unwittingly; but can be no reason for their being punished, though unwittingly they went back to the truth of the case. There can be no great guilt in our denying Christ, if Christ never died for us.

Mr. Scott partly adopts, and partly rejects, Poole's solution of this scriptural difficulty. But as he charged St. Paul with want of exactness in writing to the Romans, so also St. Peter, in the passage before us, comes in for his share of the same censure: "It was not the manner of the sacred writers, to express themselves with that systematic exactness, which many now affect." The case is not, however, one of systematic exactness, but of common intelligible writing. Mr. Scott's observation on this passage is, that Christ's ransom was of infinite sufficiency; and the proposal of it in Scripture, general; so that men are addressed according to their profession; but that Christ only intended to redeem those whom he foresaw would eventually be saved.\* On this we may remark, 1. That the sufficiency of Christ's redemption is not in question; but the redemption itself of these deniers of Christ: He is called "the Lord that bought them." In that sufficiency, too, Mr. Scott affirms, in fact, that they had no interest; for Christ did not "intend to redeem them:" On this showing, therefore, the Lord did not "buy them," which contradicts the Apostle. 2. That the "proposal of the benefits of Christ's redemption is general," and that men are addressed, accordingly, as those who are interested in it, we grant, and feel how well this accords with the doctrine of general redemption: But the difficulty lies with those who hold the limitation of Christ's

\* Notes on 2 Peter.



redemption to the elect only, to explain, not merely how it is that men are addressed generally, but how the sins of those who perish can be aggravated by the circumstance of Christ's having bought them, if he did not buy them; and how they can be punished for rejecting him, if they could never receive him, so as to be saved by him. This aggravation of their offence, by the circumstance of Christ having bought them, is the doctrine of the text, of the force of which the above interpretations are manifest evasions.

We come now to the case of the apostates, mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, vi. 4—8, and x. 26—31. With respect to these passages, it is agreed that they speak of the ultimate and eternal condemnation and rejection of the persons mentioned in them. The question then is, whether Christ died for them, as he died for such as persevere; which is to be determined by another question, whether they were ever true believers, and had received saving grace. If this be allowed, the proposition is established, that Christ died for them that perish; but in order to arrest this conclusion, all Calvinistic Divines agree in denying that the persons referred to by the Apostle, and against whom his terrible denunciations are directed, were ever true believers, or capable of becoming such; and here again we have another pregnant instance of the violence done to the obvious meaning of the word of God, through the influence of a preconceived system. For,

1. It will not be denied, that the Hebrews, to whom the Epistle was addressed, were, in the main at least, true believers; and that the passages in question were written to preserve them from apostasy; of which the rejection, and hopeless punishment, described by the Apostle, are represented as the consequences. But if St. Paul had taught them, as he must have done, if Calvinism be the doctrine of the New Testament, that they never could so fall away, and so perish, this was no warning at all to them. To suppose that he held out that as a terror, which he knew to be impossible, and had taught them also to be impossible, is the first absurdity which the Calvinistic interpretation involves.

2. It will not be denied, that he speaks of these wretched

apostates, as admonitory examples to the true believers amongst the Hebrews; but as such apostates never were believers, and had not even been rendered capable, by the grace of God, of becoming such, they could not be admonitory examples. To assume that the Apostle, for the sake of argument and admonition, supposes believers to be in the same circumstances and case as those who never were, and never could be, believers, and when he had instructed them that their cases could never be similar, is the second absurdity.

3. The apostates in question are represented, by the Apostle, as falling away from repentance, and from Christ's sacrifice for sins. The advocates of the system of partial redemption affirm, that they fell away only from their profession of repentance and doctrinal belief of Christ's sacrifice for sins, in which they never had, and never could have, any interest. Yet the Apostle places the hopelessness of their state on the impossibility of "renewing them again unto repentance;" which proves that he considered their first repentance genuine and evangelical; because the absence of such a repentance as they had at first, is given as the reason of the hopelessness of their condition. He moreover heightens the case, by alleging, that there remained "no more sacrifice for sins;" which as plainly proves, that before their apostasy there was a sacrifice for their sins, and that they had only cut themselves off from its benefits by wilfully renouncing it; in other words, that Christ died for them, and that they had placed themselves out of the reach of the benefits of his death, by this one act of aggravated apostasy. The contrast lies between a hopeful and a hopeless case. Theirs was once a hopeful case, because they had repented, and because there was then a "sacrifice for sins;" afterwards it became hopeless, because it was "impossible to renew them again unto repentance," and the sacrifice for sin no more remained for them: They had not only renounced their profession of it, but had renounced the sacrifice itself, by renouncing Christianity. Now, so to interpret the Apostle, as to make him describe the awful condition of apostates, as a "falling away" into a state of hopelessness, when, if Calvinism be the doctrine of the New Testament, their case was

never really hopeful, but was equally hopeless, as to their eternal salvation, before as after their apostasy, is the third absurdity.

4. But it is plain that theirs had been a state of actual salvation, which could only result from their having had an interest in the death of Christ. The proof of this lies in what the Apostle affirms of the previous state of those who had finally apostatized, or might so apostatize. They were "enlightened;" this, the whole train of Calvinistic commentators tell us, means a mere speculative reception of the doctrine of the Gospel: They had "tasted of the heavenly gift," and of "the good word of God;" that is, say Poole and others, "they tasted, not digested; they had superficial relishes of joy and peace," and are to be compared "to the stony ground hearers, who received the word with joy." "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" that is, say some commentators of this class, in his operations, "trying how far a natural man may be raised, and not have his nature changed;"\* others, "by the communication of miraculous powers." They had "tasted of the powers of the world to come;" that is, they had felt the powerful doctrines of the Gospel, but as all reprobates may feel them, sometimes powerfully convincing their judgment, at others troubling their consciences. "All these things," says Scott,† "often take place in the hearts and consciences of men, who yet continue unregenerate." These interpretations were undoubtedly forced upon these authors by the system they had adopted; but it unfortunately happens for them, that the Apostle uses no term less strong in describing the religious experience of these apostates than he does in speaking of that of true believers. They were "enlightened," is said of these apostates: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened," is said of the Ephesians; and "being turned from darkness to light," is the characteristic of all believers. The apostates "tasted the heavenly gift;" this, too, is affirmed of true believers: "Much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift

\* Poole *in loc.*

† Notes.



of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 17.) To be made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," is also the common distinctive character of all true Christians. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" "but ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "To taste the heavenly gift" and "the good word of God," is also made the mark of true Christianity: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Finally: "The powers of the world to come;" that is, of the Gospel dispensation, or the power of the Gospel, is a phrase which stands in precisely the same case. This Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Since, then, the Apostle expresses the prior experience of these apostates, by the same terms and phrases as those by which he designates the work of God in the hearts of those whose Christianity is, by all, acknowledged to be genuine, where is the authority on which these commentators make him describe, not a saving work in the hearts of these apostates, during the time they held fast their profession, but a simulated one? They have clearly no authority for this at all; and their comments arise, not out of the argument of St. Paul, nor out of his terms or phrases, nor from the connexion of these passages with the rest of the discourse; but out of their own theological system alone; in other words, out of a mere human opinion which supplies a meaning to the Apostle of which he gives not the most distant intimation. To make the Apostle describe the falling away from a mere profession unaccompanied with a state of grace, by terms which he is constantly using to describe and characterize a state of grace, is the fourth absurdity.

We urge, also, two other objections. The interpretations above given are below the force of the terms employed; and they are above the character of reprobates.

They are below the force of the terms employed. To "taste the heavenly gift," is not a mere intellectual or sentimental approval of it; for this heavenly gift is distinguished both from the Holy Spirit, and from the word of God, mentioned afterwards; which leaves us no choice but to interpret

it of Christ ; and then to taste of Christ, is to receive his grace and mercy : “ If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Thus the Greek Fathers, and many later Divines, understand it of the remission of sins ; which interpretation is greatly confirmed by Romans v., where “ the gift,” “ the free gift, and “ the gift by grace,” are used both for the means of our justification, and for justification itself. To “ taste the heavenly gift,” then, is, in this sense, so to taste that the Lord is gracious as to receive the remission of sins. To be made “ partakers of the Holy Ghost,” follows this in the usual order of describing the work of God in the heart. The fruit of faith is the Spirit of adoption and sanctification ; for the Spirit in his comforting and renewing influences follows our justification. But to restrain this participation of the Holy Ghost to the endowment of miraculous powers, requires it to be previously established, either, 1. That all professing Christians, in that age, were thus endowed with miraculous powers, of which there is no proof ; or, 2. That only those who were thus endowed with miraculous gifts were capable of this aggravated apostasy ; and then the Apostle’s warning would not be a general one, even to the Christians of the apostolic age, nor even to all the believing Hebrews, which it manifestly is. On the other hand, since all true believers, in the sense of the Apostle, received the Holy Ghost in his comforting and renovating influences, the meaning of the phrase becomes obvious, and it lays down the proper ground for a general admonition. Again : “ To taste the good word of God,” is still an advance in the process of a genuine experience. It is tasting the good word, that is, the goodness of the word, in a course of experience and practice ; having personal proof of its goodness and adaptation to man’s state in the world ; for to argue from the term “ taste,” as though something superficial and transitory only were meant, is as absurd as to argue from the threat of Christ that those who refused the invitation of his servants should not “ taste” of his supper, that he only excluded them from a superficial and transient gustation of his salvation here and hereafter ; or that, when the Psalmist calls upon us to “ taste and see that the Lord is good,” he excludes a full, and rich, and permanent

experience of the divine goodness. Finally : If by the “ powers of the world to come,” it could be proved that the Apostle meant the miraculous evidences of the truth of the Gospel, it would not follow, that he supposes the persons spoken of to be endowed with miraculous powers ; but that to taste these powers, was rather to experience the abundant blessing of a religion thus confirmed and demonstrated by signs and wonders and divers miracles, according to what he urges in chap. ii. 4, of the same Epistle. The phrase, however, is probably a still further advance upon the former, and signifies a personal experience of the mighty energy and saving power of the Gospel. Thus the interpretation of the Calvinists has the effect of making the Apostle speak little things in great words, and of using unmeaning tautologies. To “ partake of the Holy Ghost ” is, according to them, to have the gift of miracles ; and to taste “ the powers of the world to come,” is to have the gift of miracles. To taste the “ heavenly gift,” is to have a superficial relish of Gospel doctrine ; and to “ taste the good word of God,” is also to have a superficial relish of Gospel doctrine : But how, then, are we to take the term “ taste,” when the Apostle speaks of tasting “ the powers of the world to come ? ” According to these comments, this can only mean that they had a superficial taste of the power of working miracles !

But as these interpretations are below the force of the terms, so they are above the capacity of the reprobate. “ They had, moreover,” says Scott, “ tasted of the good word of God, and their convictions, impressions, and transient affections made them sensible that it was a good word, and that it was for their good to attend to it ; and their purposes of doing so had produced such hopes and joys, as have been described in the case of the stony ground hearers, Matt. xiii. 21, 22.” That Mr. Scott had no right apprehension of the class of persons intended by those who received the good seed upon stony ground, might easily be proved ; but this is beside our present purpose. We find in the words quoted above, (and we refer to Mr. Scott rather than to the older Divines of the same school, because it is often said that Calvinism is now modified and improved,) “ convictions,” “ impressions of the goodness of the word,” and



purposes of attending to it, ascribed to the non-elect ; persons to whose salvation this bar is placed,—that, according to this commentator, and all others who adopt the same system, Christ never “intentionally” died for them. We ask, then, Are these “convictions,” “impressions,” and “purposes,” from the grace of God working in man, or from the natural man wholly unassisted by the grace of God ? If the latter, then what becomes of the doctrine of the entire corruption of human nature, which they profess to hold, and that so strenuously ? “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” By the “flesh,” the Apostle means, doubtless, his natural and unassisted state. Yet how many “good things” are ascribed, by Mr. Scott, to the very reprobate ! “Conviction of the truth of the Gospel” was, doubtless, “good,” and showed, in that day especially, when the prejudices of education had not yet come in to the aid of truth, an honest spirit of inquiry, and a docile mind. “Impressions” are still better, as they argue affection to truth, which the natural man, as such, hates ; and these are improved into an acknowledgment “of the goodness of the word,” though it is a reproving word, and a doctrine of holiness, and consequently of restraint. To this the merely “carnal mind,” which St. Paul declares to be “enmity against God,” is here allowed not only to assent, but also to perceive it with some taste and approving relish. “Purposes of attending to this good word,” are also admitted ; which is a still further advance, and must by all be acknowledged to be good, as they are the very basis of real religious attainment. Yet if all these, which, in the judgment of every spiritual man, would be considered as placing such persons in a very hopeful state, and would give joy to angels unless they were admitted to the secret of reprobation, are to be ascribed to nature, then the carnal mind, according to Mr. Scott’s theory, is not absolutely and in all cases “enmity against God ;” in our “flesh some good thing may dwell ;” and we are not by nature “dead in trespasses and sins.”

But since this cannot be maintained in defiance of the Scriptures, let us suppose that these good feelings are the effects of the grace of God, and the influences of the Holy

Spirit in man ; to what end, then, is that grace exerted ? Is it that it may lead to salvation ? This is denied, and consistently so ; for can such convictions, and desires, and purposes lead to true repentance, when Christ gives true repentance to none but to the elect ? Nor can they lead to pardon ; because Christ has not intentionally “died for the persons in question.” Is the end, then, as Poole, or rather his continuator, states it, that the Holy Spirit may “try how far a natural man may be raised” without ceasing to be so ? If that is affirmed, for whose sake is the experiment tried ? Not surely for the sake of the Holy Spirit, whose omniscience needs no instruction by experiment : Not for ours ; because this, instead of being edifying, only puzzles and confounds us ; for who can tell how far this experiment may go, and how far it is now making upon himself ? This, too, is so very unworthy an aspersion upon the Holy Spirit, that it ought to make sober men very much suspect the system which requires it. Is it then, finally, as some have affirmed, to make the persons more guilty, and to heighten their condemnation ? How few Calvinists, in the present day, are bold enough to affirm this, although the advocates of that system have formerly done it ! and yet this is the only practical end which their system will allow to be assigned to such an act as that which, by a strange abuse of terms, is called the operation of “common grace” in the hearts of the reprobate. In no other practical end can it issue, but to aggravate their guilt and damnation, as the old Divines of this school perceived and acknowledged. Either, then, their interpretation of these passages affirms a change in the principles and feelings of the persons spoken of by the Apostle in this Epistle, much above the capacity and power of reprobates, greatly as it falls below the real import of the terms used ; or else those who advocate the doctrine of reprobation are bound to the revolting conclusion, that the Holy Spirit thus works in them only to promote and deepen their destruction.

To that class of texts which make it the duty of men to believe the Gospel, and threaten them with punishment for not believing, and which we adduced to prove, by necessary impli-

cation, that Christ died for all men, it has been replied, that it is the duty of all men to believe the Gospel, whether they are interested in the death of Christ, or not; and that they are guilty and deserving of punishment for not believing it. By this argument, it is conceived that all such passages are made consistent with the doctrine of the limited extent of the death of Christ.

On both sides, then, it is granted, that it is the bounden duty of all men who hear the Gospel to believe it; and that the violation of this duty induces condemnation. But if Christ died not for all such persons, I think it is plain that it cannot be their duty to believe the Gospel; and if this can be established, then does the scriptural principle of the obligation of all men to believe, which is acknowledged on both sides, refute all limitation of the extent of Christ's atonement.

To settle this point, it is necessary to determine what is meant by believing the Gospel. Some writers in this controversy seem to take it only in the sense of "giving credit to the Gospel as a divine revelation;" and not for "accepting and trusting in it in order to salvation." But we have, in the New Testament, no such division of the obligation of believing into two distinct duties; one laid upon one class of persons, and the other upon another class. So far from this, the faith which the Gospel requires of all, is trust in the Gospel;—"repentance towards God, and faith" (trust) "in our Lord Jesus Christ." Will any say, that when all men are commanded "everywhere to repent," two kinds of repentance are intended, one ineffectual, the other effectual; one to death, the other to life? And if not, will he contend that God enjoins one kind of faith upon some, a faith which cannot lead to salvation; another kind of faith, which does lead to salvation, upon others? that he commands a dead faith to the reprobate, a living faith to the elect? For, as is the intention of the command, such must be the duty; and if it is the duty of the reprobate to believe with the mere faith of assent, which, as to them, is dead, then no more was ever required of them, in the intention of God, than this dead faith. But if any will affirm this, they must show us such a restricted and modified com-



mand from God ; and they must point out, in the commands which we have to believe in Christ, such a distinction of the obligation of believing into a higher and lower duty. There is no such modified command, and there is no such distinction ; but, on the contrary, the faith which is required of all is that, and not less than that, whereof cometh salvation ; for with remission of sins and salvation it is constantly connected. “ He that believeth shall be saved.” “ Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish.” “ That believing ye might have life through his name.” “ To him give all the Prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” The faith, then, required of all, is true faith ; true faith following true repentance ; the trust of a true penitent in the sacrifice of Christ as offered for his sins, that he may be forgiven, and received into the family of God.

If this, then, be the faith which is required of those who hear the Gospel, it is not and cannot be the duty of those to believe the Gospel, in the scriptural sense of believing, for whom Christ died not. 1. Because it is impossible, and God cannot command a thing impossible, and then punish men for not doing it ; since this contradicts all true notions of justice and benevolence. Nor does it alter the case whether the impossibility arises from a positive necessitating decree, or from withholding the aid necessary to enable them to comply with the command : Such persons as those for whom Christ died not, never had, and never can have, the power to exercise the saving faith which is enjoined upon them ; and being impossible to them, it never could be the subject of express command and obligation as to them ; which, nevertheless, it is. 2. Because, according to the Calvinistic opinion, it is not in the intention of God that they should believe and be saved ; what, therefore, he never intended, he could not command ; and yet he has plainly commanded it. 3. Because what all are bound to believe or trust in, is true ; but it is false, according to this system, that Christ died for the reprobate, and therefore they are not bound to believe or trust in him, though they are both commanded to believe, and threatened with condemnation if they believe not.

Here, then, is the dilemma into which all must fall, who deny that the necessary inference from the universal obligation to believe in Christ, is, as we have stated it, that he died for all. If they deny the universality of the obligation to believe, they deny plain and express Scripture, which commands all men to believe; if they affirm the obligation to believe to be universal, they hold that men are bound to do that which is impossible; that the Lawgiver commands them to do what he never intended they should do; and that they are bound to believe and trust in what is not true, namely, that Christ died for them, and thus to lean upon a broken reed, and to trust their salvation to a delusion.

This is a difficulty which the theologians of this school have felt. The Synod of Dort says, "It is the promise of the Gospel, that whosoever believes in Christ crucified should not perish, but have everlasting life; which promise, together with the injunction of repentance and faith, ought, promiscuously and without distinction, to be declared and published to all men and people to whom God in his good pleasure sends the Gospel."\* But as some of the later Calvinists found themselves perplexed with this statement, they began to differ from the Synod; and, allowing that Christ died for all whom he commands to believe in him, denied that God had commanded all men so to believe.† These Divines chose to fall on the opposite horn of the dilemma, and thus expressly to deny the word of God. Others have endeavoured to escape the difficulty by making faith in Christ a command of the moral law, under which even reprobates, as they take it, unquestionably are; and they argue, that as, by the principle of moral law, all are bound to believe every thing which God hath revealed, so by that law all are bound to believe in Christ, and, failing of that, are by the moral law justly condemned. It would be a sufficient answer to this to show, that no man in the state of a reprobate, as they represent it, is under law of any kind, except a law of necessity to do evil; but, waving this, it were as easy to prove that, because the moral law obliges us, "in principle,"

\* *Act. Syn. Dord.*, par. 1, cap. 2, art. 5.

† Vide Womack's *Arcana Dogmatum*, p. 67.

to do all which God commands, the command to the Jews to circumcise their children was a command of the moral law, as that to believe in Christ is a command of the moral law, because, in principle, it obliges us to believe what God has revealed. But should it be admitted that all are bound, by the moral law, to believe all that God reveals, yet, according to them, it is not revealed that Christ died for all; this we contend for, but they contend against; all are not, upon that very principle, therefore, bound to believe that Christ died for them. Further: Those who hold this notion contend, that the moral law commands us to do a thing impossible, and contrary to truth; and thus they fall upon the other horn of the dilemma.

The last class of texts we have adduced in favour of general redemption consists of those which impute the blame and fault of their non-salvation to men themselves. If Christ died for all men, so as to make their salvation practicable, then the fault, according to the doctrine of Scripture, lies in themselves; if he died not so for them that they may be saved, then the bar to their salvation lies out of themselves, and in the absence of any saving provision for them in the Gospel, which is contrary to the doctrine of Scripture.

We enter not now upon the questions of the invincibility of grace, and free and bound will. These will come under consideration in their place; and we now confine ourselves to the argument, as it is grounded upon the texts of this class, which are given above. The common reply to this argument, at least among the more moderate kind of Calvinists, is, that the fault is indeed in the will of man, and that if men willed to come to Christ that they might have life, they would have life; and thus, they would have it understood that the argument is answered. This, however, we deny; they have neither refuted it, nor escaped its force; and nothing which is thus apparently conceded weakens the force of the conclusion, that, if the bar to men's salvation be wholly in themselves, it lies not in the want of a provision made for their salvation in the Gospel; and, therefore, they are so interested in the death of Christ, that they may be saved by it.

For let us put the case as to the non-elect, who are indeed



the persons in question. Either it is possible for them to will to come to Christ, and to believe in him; or it is not. If the former, then they may come to Christ and believe in him, without obtaining life and salvation; for he can dispense these blessings only to those for whom he purchased them, which, it is contended, he did for the elect only. If it is not possible for them to come to him, then the bar to their salvation is not in themselves; but in that which makes it impossible for them to will to come to Christ, and to believe in him. If it be said, that though this is impossible to them, yet that still the bar is in themselves, because it is in the obstinacy and perverseness of their own wills; we ask, whether the natural will of the elect is so much better than that of the reprobate, that, by virtue of that better natural will, they come to Christ, and believe in him? This they will deny, and ascribe their willing and coming to Christ, and believing in him, to the influence only of divine grace. It will follow, then, from this, that the bar to this same kind of willing and believing, on the part of the reprobate, lies not in themselves, where the Scriptures constantly place it, and so charge it upon men as their fault, and the reason of their condemnation; but in something without them, even in the determination and decree of God not to bestow upon them that influence of his grace, by which this good will, and this power to believe in Christ, are wrought in the elect, which is precisely what the Synod of Dort has affirmed: "This was the most free counsel, gracious will, and intention of God the Father; that the lively and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should manifest itself in all the elect, for the bestowing upon them only, justifying faith; and bringing them infallibly by it unto eternal life."\* The doctrine cannot, therefore, be true; for the Scriptures plainly place the bar to the salvation of them that are lost, in themselves, and charge the fault only on the wilful disobedience and unbelief of men; whilst this opinion places it in the refusal, on the part of God, to bestow that grace upon the non-elect by which alone the evil of their natural will can be removed.

\* Cap. 2, art. 9.

Nor is this in the least remedied by arguing, that, as Christ is rejected freely and voluntarily by the natural will of man, the guilt is still chargeable upon himself. For, not here to anticipate what may be said on the freedom of the will, it is confessed by Calvinists that the will of the reprobate is not free to choose to come to Christ, and believe in him, since, without grace, not even the elect can do this. But if it were free to choose Christ, and believe in him, the not doing it would not be chargeable upon them as a fault: For they do not reject Christ as a Saviour, since he is not offered to them as such; and they sin not, by not believing, that is, by not trusting in Christ for salvation. For as it is not the will of God that they should so believe, they violate no command given to them to believe, unless it be held that God commands them to do that which he wills they should not do; which is only absurdly to say that he wills, and that he does not will, the same thing. And seeing that his commands are the declarations of his will, if the command reaches to them, it is a declaration that he wills that concerning them which, on this system, he does not will; and this contradiction all are bound to maintain who charge the want of faith as a fault upon those to whom the power of believing is not imparted.

But the argument from this class of texts is not exhausted. They not only place that bar and fault which prevents the salvation of men in themselves, but they as expressly exclude God from all participation in it, contrary to the doctrine before us. "He willeth all men to be saved;" he has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." "He sent his Son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;" and he invites all, beseeches all, obtests all, and makes even his threatenings merciful, since he interposes them to prevent men from going on still in their trespasses, and involving themselves in final ruin.

Perhaps not many Calvinists in the present day are disposed to resort to the ancient subterfuge of a secret and a revealed will of God;\* and yet it is difficult to conceive how they can

\* The scholastic terms are *voluntas signi*, and *voluntas beneplaciti*, a signified or revealed will, and a will of pleasure or purpose.

avoid admitting this notion, without totally denying that which is so clearly written, that God “willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;” and that he commands, by his Apostle, that prayers should be made “for all men.” The universality of such declarations has already been established; and no way is left for escaping the difficulty in this direction. The incompatibility of such declarations with the limited extent of Christ’s death is therefore obvious, unless the term “will” can be modified. But if God declares his will in absolute terms, whilst he has yet secret reserves of a contrary kind; (to say nothing of the injury done, by such a notion, to the character of the God of truth, whose words are without dross of falsehood, “as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times;”) this is to will that all men may be saved in word, and yet not to will it in fact, which is in truth not to will it at all. No subtlety of distinction can reconcile this. Nor, according to this scheme of doctrine, can God, in any way, will the salvation of the non-elect. It is only under one condition, that he wills the salvation of any man; namely, through the death of Christ. His justice required this atonement for sin; and he could not will man to be saved to the dishonour of his justice. If, then, that atonement does not extend to all men, he cannot will the salvation of all men; for such of them as are not interested in this atonement, could not be saved consistently with his righteous administration, and he could not, therefore, will it. If, then, he wills the non-elect to be saved, in any sense, he must will this independently of Christ’s sacrifice for sins; and if he cannot will this for the reason just given, he cannot “will all men to be saved,” which is contrary to the texts quoted. He cannot, therefore, invite all to be saved; he cannot beseech all by his Ministers to be reconciled to him; for these acts could only proceed from his willing them to be saved. And for the same reason, all men ought not to be prayed for by those who hold this doctrine, since they assume, that it is not the will of God that all men should be saved. Thus they repeal the Apostle’s precept, as well as the principle upon which it is built, by mere human authority; or else they



so interpret the principle as to impeach the truth of God ; and so practise the precept as to indulge reserves in their own mind, similar to those they feign to be in the mind of God. Whilst, therefore, it remains on record, that “ God willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth ; ” and that he “ willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ; ” it must be concluded, that Christ died for all ; and that the reason of the destruction of any part of our race lies not in the want of a provision for their salvation ; not in any limitation of the purchase of Christ, and the administration of his grace ; but in their obstinate rejection of both.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*The same Subject continued.*

So far, then, we have advanced in this discussion, as to show, that whilst no passage of Scripture can be adduced, or is even pretended to exist, which declares that Christ did not die equally for all men, there are numerous passages which explicitly, and in terms which cannot by any fair interpretation be wrested from that meaning, declare the contrary; and that there are others as numerous, which contain the same doctrine by necessary implication and inference. To implication and inference the Calvinist Divines also resort; and the more so as they have not a direct text in favour of their scheme. It is necessary, therefore, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of this controversy, compressed into as narrow limits as possible, to examine those parts of Scripture which, according to their inferential interpretations, limit not merely the actual, but the intentional, efficacy of the death of Christ to the elect only.

The first are those passages which treat of persons, said to be elected, foreknown, and predestinated to the spiritual and celestial blessings of the new dispensation; and the argument from the texts in which these distinctions occur, is, that the persons so called, elected, foreknown, and predestinated, are, by that very distinction, marked out as the only persons to whom the death of Christ intentionally extends.

We reserve it to another place to state the systematic views which the followers of Calvin, in their different shades of opinion, take of the doctrines of election, &c., lest our more simple inquiry into the sense of Scripture should be disturbed by extraneous topics; and we are now, therefore, merely called to consider, how far this argument, which is professedly drawn from Scripture, and not from metaphysical principles, is sup-

ported or refuted, by an examination of those portions of holy writ on which it is usually built. And it will not prove a difficult task to show, that, when fairly interpreted, they contain nothing which obliges us to narrow our interpretation of those passages which extend the benefit of the death of Christ to all mankind ; and that, in some views, they strongly corroborate their most extended meaning. Of a divine election, a choosing and separating from others, we have three kinds mentioned in the Scriptures.

The first is the election of individuals to perform some particular and special service. Cyrus was elected to rebuild the temple ; the twelve Apostles were chosen, elected, to their office by Christ ; St. Paul was a chosen, or elected, vessel, to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. This kind of election to special office and service has, however, manifestly no relation to the limitation of eternal salvation, either in respect of the persons themselves so chosen, or of others. With respect to themselves, it did not confer upon them an absolute security. One of the twelve elected Apostles was Judas, who fell and was lost ; and St. Paul confesses his own personal liability to become “ a castaway,” after all his zeal and abundant labours. With respect to others, the twelve Apostles, and St. Paul afterwards, were elected to preach the Gospel in order to the salvation of all to whom they had access.

The second kind of election which we find in Scripture, is the election of nations, or bodies of people, to eminent religious privileges, and in order to accomplish, by their superior illumination, the merciful purposes of God, in benefiting other nations or bodies of people. Thus the descendants of Abraham, the Jews, were chosen to receive special revelations of truth ; and to be the people of God, to be his visible church, and publicly to observe and uphold his worship. “ The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” “ The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people.” It was especially on account of the application of the terms “ elect,” “ chosen,” and “ peculiar,” to the Jewish people, that



they were so familiarly used by the Apostles in their Epistles addressed to the believing Jews and Gentiles, then constituting the church of Christ in various places. For Christians were the subjects, also, of this second kind of election; the election of bodies of men to be the visible people and church of God in the world, and to be endowed with peculiar privileges. Thus they became, though in a more special and exalted sense, the chosen people, the elect of God. We say, "in a more special sense," because as the entrance into the Jewish church was by natural birth, and the entrance into the Christian church, properly so called, is by faith and a spiritual birth, these terms, although many became Christians by mere profession, and enjoyed various privileges in consequence of their people or nation being chosen to receive the Gospel, have generally respect, in the New Testament, to bodies of true believers, or to the whole body of true believers as such. They are not, therefore, to be interpreted, according to the scheme of Dr. Taylor of Norwich, by the constitution of the Jewish, but by the constitution of the Christian, church.

To understand the nature of this election, as applied sometimes to particular bodies of Christians, as when St. Peter says, "The church which is at Babylon, elected together with you," and sometimes to the whole body of believers every where; and also the reason of the frequent use of the term "election," and of the occurrence of allusions to the fact; it is to be remembered, that a great religious revolution, so to speak, had occurred in the age of the Apostles; with the full import of which we cannot, without calling in the aid of a little reflection, be adequately impressed. This was no other than the abrogation of the church-state of the Jews, which had continued for so many ages. They had been the only visibly acknowledged people of God in all the nations of the earth; for, whatever pious people might have existed in other nations, they were not, in the sight of men, and collectively, acknowledged as "the people of Jehovah." They had no written revelations, no appointed ministry, no forms of authorized initiation into his church and covenant, no appointed holy days, no sanctioned ritual. All these were peculiar to the

Jews, who were, therefore, an elected and peculiar people. This distinguished honour they were about to lose. They might have retained it, had they, by believing the Gospel, admitted the believing Gentiles of all nations to share it with them; but the great reason of their peculiarity and election, as a nation, was terminated by the coming of the Messiah, who was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of his people Israel." Their pride and consequent unbelief resented this; which will explain their enmity to the believing part of the Gentiles, who, when that which St. Paul calls "the fellowship of the mystery" was fully explained, chiefly by the glorious ministry of that Apostle himself, were called into this church-relation and state of visible acknowledgment as the people of God, which the Jews had formerly enjoyed, and that with even a higher degree of glory, in proportion to the superior spirituality of the new dispensation. It was this doctrine which excited that strong irritation in the minds of the unbelieving Jews, and in some partially Christianized ones, to which so many references are made in the New Testament. They were "provoked," were made "jealous," and were often roused to the madness of persecuting opposition by it. There was then a new election of a new people of God, to be composed of Jews, not by virtue of their natural descent, but through their faith in Christ, and of Gentiles of all nations, also believing, and put, as believers, on an equal ground with the believing Jews; and there was also a rejection, a reprobation, if the term please any one better; but not an absolute one: For the election was offered to the Jews first, in every place, by offering them the Gospel. Some embraced it, and submitted to be the elect people of God, on the new ground of faith, instead of the old one of natural descent; and therefore the Apostle, Rom. xi. 7, calls the believing part of the Jews "the election," in opposition to those who opposed this "election of grace," and still clung to their former and now repealed election as Jews and the descendants of Abraham: "But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." The offer had been made to the whole nation; all might have joined the one body of believing

Jews and believing Gentiles ; but the major part of them refused : They would not “ come in to the supper ;” they “ made light of it ;” light of an election founded on faith, and which placed the relation of the people of God upon spiritual attainments, and offered to them only spiritual blessings. They were, therefore, deprived of election and church-relationship of every kind :—Their temple was burned ; their political state abolished ; their genealogies confounded ; their worship annihilated ; and all visible acknowledgment of them by God as a church withdrawn, and transferred to a church henceforward to be composed chiefly of Gentiles : And thus, says St. Paul, Rom. x. 19, “ were fulfilled the words of Moses, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish” (ignorant and idolatrous) “ people I will anger you.”

It is easy now to see what is the import of the calling and election of the Christian church, as spoken of in the New Testament. It was not the calling and the electing of one nation in particular to succeed the Jews ; but it was the calling and the electing of believers in all nations, wherever the Gospel should be preached, to be in reality what the Jews had been but typically, and, therefore, in an inferior degree, the visible church of God, “ his people,” under Christ “ the Head ;” with an authenticated revelation ; with an appointed ministry, never to be lost ; with authorized worship ; with holy days and festivals ; with instituted forms of initiation ; and with special protection and favour.

This second kind of election being thus explained, we may inquire whether any thing arises out of it, either as it respects the Jewish church, or the Christian church, which obliges us in any degree to limit the explicit declarations of Scripture, as to the universal extent of the intentional benefit of the atonement of Christ.

With respect to the ancient election of the Jews to be the peculiar people and visible church of God, we may observe,

1. That it did not argue such a limitation of the saving mercy of God to them as that their election secured the salva-



tion of every Jew individually. This will be acknowledged by all ; for, as the foundation of their church-state was their natural relation to Abraham, (and our Lord, with allusion to this, says to Nicodemus, “ That which is born of the flesh is flesh,”) none of them could be saved by virtue of being “ Jews outwardly.”

2. That it did not argue, that sufficient, though not equal, means of salvation were not left to the non-elected Gentile nations. These were still “ a law unto themselves ;” and “ in every nation,” says St. Peter, “ he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

3. That, so far from the election of the Jewish nation arguing that the mercy of God was restrained from the Gentile nations, it is manifest that, great reason as the Almighty had to be provoked by their idolatries, the election of the Jews was intended for their benefit also ; that it was not only designed to preserve truth, but to diffuse it, and to counteract the spread of superstition and idolatry. The miracles wrought from age to age among them, exalted Jehovah above the gods of the Heathen ; rays of light from their sacred books and institutions spread far beyond themselves ; the temple of Solomon had its court of the Gentiles, and the stranger from a far country had access to it, and enjoyed his right of praying to the true God ; their captivities and dispersions wondrously fulfilled the purposes of justice as to them, and of mercy as to the nations into which they were carried ; and their whole history bore an illustrious part in that series of the divine dispensations by which the Gentile world was prepared for the coming of Christ, and the establishment of his religion. This subject has already been adverted to and illustrated in the first part of this work. Jerusalem was, in an inferior sense, literally “ the joy of the whole earth ;” and “ in the seed of Abraham,” all the nations of the earth have, in all ages, in some degree, been blessed.

With respect to the election of the Christian church, we also observe,—

1. That neither does its election suppose such a special grace of God as secures infallibly the salvation of every one

of its members ; that is, in other words, of every elected person. For, to pass over the case of those who are Christians but in name, even true Christians are exhorted to give diligence to make their “ calling and election sure ;” and are warned against turning back to perdition. We have also seen, in the case of the apostates mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, in point of fact, some of those who had thus been actually elected, and brought into a state of salvation, had fallen away into a condition of extreme hazard, or of utter hopelessness.

2. That the election of Christians, as members of the church of Christ, concludes nothing against the saving mercy of God being still exercised as to those who are not of the church. Even the Calvinists cannot deny this ; for many who are not now of the body of the visible and true church of Christ, may, according to their scheme, be yet called and chosen into that body, and thus partake of an election which, whilst they are notoriously wicked and alien from the church of Christ, they do not actually partake of, whatever may be the secret purposes of God concerning them.

3. That Christians are thus elected, and made the church of God, not in consequence of others being excluded from the compassions and redeeming mercy of Christ ; but for their benefit and salvation, that they also may be called into the fellowship of the Gospel. “ Ye are the light of the world ;” “ Ye are the salt of the earth.” But in what sense could the church be “ the light of the world,” were there no capacity in the world to receive the same light with which it is itself enlightened ? or “ the salt of the earth,” if it did not exist for the purifying of the mass beyond itself, with the same purity ? Yet if such a capacity exists in the world, it is from the grace of God alone that it derives it, and not from nature ; a grace which could be imparted to the world only in consequence of the death of Christ. Thus nothing is to be argued from the actual election of the Christian church, as God’s visible and acknowledged people on earth, in favour of the doctrine, that election limits the benefits of our Lord’s atonement ; but, on the contrary, this election of the church has, for one of its final

causes, the illumination of the world. But as Calvinistic commentators have so generally confounded this collective election with personal election, (a doctrine to which, in its proper place, we shall advert,) and have, in consequence, misunderstood and misinterpreted the argument of St. Paul, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans ; this celebrated discourse of the Apostle requires to be briefly examined.

Let the reader, then, take the Epistle in his hand, and follow the argument in these chapters, with reference to the determining of the two main questions at issue, namely, whether personal or collective election be the subject of the Apostle's discourse ; and whether the election of which he speaks, of whatever kind it may be, is, in the sense of the Calvinists, unconditional.

Let us examine the discourse, first, with reference to the question of personal or collective election.

It is acknowledged by all, that, whatever other subjects the Apostle may or may not connect with it, he treats of the casting off of the Jews as the visible church of God, and the calling of the Gentiles into that relation. For the case of the Jews he expresses great sorrow of heart ; not, indeed, because God had now determined to constitute his visible church upon a new principle, that of faith, and no longer upon that of natural descent from Abraham ; for to announce this doctrine St. Paul was chosen to be an Apostle, and to call, by earnest and extensive labours, not only the Gentiles, but the Jews, thankfully to submit to it, by receiving the Gospel. But he had great sorrow of heart, both on account of their having rejected this gracious offer, and of the calamities which the approaching subversion of their nation would bring upon them. (Verses 1, 2.) The enumeration which he makes, in verses 4 and 5, of the religious honours and privileges of the Jewish nation, whilst it remained a church accomplishing the purposes of God, shows that by proclaiming the new foundation on which God would now construct his church, and elect to himself a people out of all nations, he did not intend to detract from the divinity or glory of the Mosaic dispensation.



The objection in the minds of the Jews, to this doctrine of the abolition of the Jewish visible church as founded upon descent from Abraham, in the line of Isaac, was, as we may collect from verse 6, that it was contrary to the word and promise of God made to Abraham. This objection St. Paul first refutes: "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect," literally, "has fallen," or "fallen to the ground," that is, has not been accomplished; or, as though this election of a new church, composed only of believing Jews and Gentiles, was contrary to the promises made to Abraham, Genesis xvii. 7, 8: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This he proves, from several events, which the Jews could not deny, as being in the records of their own history. By these facts he shows, that the exclusion of a part of the seed of Abraham, at various times, from being the visible church of God, was not, as the Jews themselves must allow, any violation of the covenant with Abraham. He first instances the case of the descendants of Jacob himself, although he was the son of Isaac. "All are not Israel," (God's visible church and acknowledged people,) "who are of Israel," or Jacob; for a great part of the ten tribes who had been carried into captivity before the Babylonian invasion of Judah, had never returned, had never been again collected into a people, and had, for ages, been cast out of their ancient church-state and relation, though, by natural descent, they were "of Israel," that is, descendants of Jacob.

From Jacob he ascends to Abraham, verse 7: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children," that is, Abraham's seed, in the sense of the promise; "but in Isaac," not in Ishmael, "shall thy seed be called;" "that is, they which are the children of the flesh," Ishmael by Hagar, and his descendants, "these are not the children of God. But the children of the promise," Isaac, born of Sarah, and his descendants, "are counted for the seed;" meaning, obviously, for that seed to whom the promise refers. He gives a third instance of this election and exclusion, taken from the children of Isaac, verses 10—13. "And not only this, but

when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election," the election of one in preference to the other, "might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." On this last passage, so often perverted to serve the system of Calvinian election and reprobation, a few remarks more at large may be allowed.

1. The argument of the Apostle, of which this instance is in continuance, requires us to understand that he is still speaking of the seed intended in the promise, which did not comprise all the descendants either of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, for he brings instances of exclusion from each; but such as God elected to be his visible church: He is not, therefore, speaking of the personal election or rejection of Isaac, or Ishmael, or Jacob, or Esau, but of their descendants in certain lines, as elected to be the acknowledged church of God.

2. This is proved, also, from those passages in the history of Moses which furnish the facts on which the Apostle reasons, and which he quotes briefly as being well known to the Jews: "As it is written, The elder shall serve the younger." Now this is written Genesis xxv. 23: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder," the descendants of the elder, "shall serve the younger." So far, indeed, was this prophecy from being intended of Esau personally, that he himself never did serve his brother Jacob, although he wantonly surrendered to him his birthright. Another passage is found in the Prophet Malachi, (i. 2, 3,) and expresses God's dealings, not with the individuals, Jacob and Esau, but with their descendants, who, according to frequent usage in Scripture, are called by the names of their first ancestors: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilder-

ness;" judgments which fell not upon Esau personally, but upon the Edomites, his descendants.

3. If the Apostle, in this instance of Jacob and Esau, speaks of the rejection or reprobation of individuals, he says nothing at all to his purpose, because he is discoursing of the rejection of the Jews, as a nation, from being any longer the visible and acknowledged church of God in the world; so that instances of individual reprobation would have been impertinent to his purpose. But to proceed with the Apostle's discourse:—

Having shown, by these instances, that God had limited the covenant to a part of the descendants of Abraham, at different periods, he puts it to the objecting Jews to say, whether, on that account, there was a failure of his covenant with Abraham: "What shall we say then, Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." The word "unrighteousness" is usually taken in the sense of injustice, but is sometimes used in the sense of falsehood and unfaithfulness, by the writers of the New Testament, as well as by the LXX.; and in this sense it well agrees with the Apostle's reasoning: "Is there then unfaithfulness with God," because he has so frequently limited the promise made to the seed of Abraham, to particular branches of that seed? The Apostle denies that in this there was any unfaithfulness, or, in the sense of injustice, any "unrighteousness in God;" and the Jews themselves were bound to agree with him, since, as the Apostle adds, it was a general principle laid down in their own law, by the Lawgiver himself when speaking to Moses, and by which, therefore, all such promises of special favour must be interpreted,—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The connexion of these words, as they stand in Exodus xxxiii. 19, shows that the mercy and grace here spoken of refer not, as Beza would have it, to that mercy exercised to individuals which supposes misery, and consists in the exercise of pardon; but to the granting of special favours and privileges. For the words are spoken to Moses, in answer to his prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." To him God had before said, verse 17,



“Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by thy name.” He was not, therefore, in the case of a guilty, miserable man. Nor do the words refer to the forgiveness of the people at his intercession. This had been done; the transaction, as to them, had been finished, as the history shows; and then Moses, encouraged by the success of his intercessions for them, makes a bold but wholly personal request for himself: “And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious,” in showing these great condescensions, “to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” God has a right to select whom he pleases to enjoy special privileges; in this instance he treated Moses with special favour and benignity,—in which procedure there was manifestly no “unrighteousness,” and, therefore, in limiting his favours to such branches of Abraham’s seed as he chose to elect, neither his justice nor his truth was impeached. This is obvious, when the words are interpreted of the election of collective bodies of men, and of the individuals which compose them, to peculiar favours and religious privileges; whilst yet to all others are still left the means of salvation. But it lies upon them who interpret this part of Scripture of personal unconditional election and reprobation, to show how it can be a “righteous” proceeding to punish men for not availing themselves of means of salvation which are never afforded them. This is manifestly “unrighteous;” but in the election and rejection spoken of by the Apostle, he expressly denies that there is “unrighteousness with God;” and does it in a most solemn manner, exclaiming, “God forbid:” And therefore the election and rejection, of which he speaks, is not the unconditional election and reprobation of individuals to and from eternal salvation.

The conclusion of the Apostle’s answer to the objection of the Jews, that the rejection of a part of the Jewish nation, even all who did not believe in Christ, was contrary to the promises made to Abraham, is, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth

mercy." He grants special favours, as the term "showing mercy," in the preceding verse, has been already proved to mean ; and in granting these special favours he often acts contrary to the designs and efforts of men, and frustrates both. The allusion contained in these words, to the case of Isaac and Esau, is, therefore, highly beautiful and appropriate : "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Isaac willed that Esau, the first born, should have the blessing ; and Esau ran for the venison as the means of obtaining it ; but still Jacob obtained it. This blessing was not, however, a personal one, but referred to the people of whom Jacob was to be the progenitor, as the history given by Moses will show. Thus this case also affords no example of personal election.

The Apostle, having proved that there was neither unfaithfulness nor unrighteousness in God, in selecting, of his own good pleasure, or, if the term please better, by his "sovereignty," the persons to be endowed with special religious honours and privileges, proceeds to show, with reference not only to the exclusion of the Jews as a nation from the visible church, but also to the terrible judgments which our Lord himself had predicted, and which were about to come upon them, that he exercises also the prerogative of making some notorious sinners, and especially when they set themselves to oppose his purposes, the eminent and signal objects of his displeasure. Here again he uses, for the sake of illustration, an example taken from the Jewish Scriptures. But let the example be marked. Had it been his intention to show that the personal election of Isaac and Jacob necessarily implied the personal reprobation of Ishmael and Esau ; and that their not receiving special privileges necessarily cut them off from salvation, so that, being left to themselves, they became objects of wrath, then would he have selected them as his illustrative examples, for this would have been required by his argument. But he selects Pharaoh, not a descendant of Abraham ; a person not involved in the cases of non-election which had taken place in Abraham's family ; but a notoriously wicked Prince, and one who resolved to oppose himself to the designs of God

in the deliverance of Israel from bondage. His doctrine, then, manifestly is, that when these two characters meet in individuals, or in nations,—notorious vice, and open opposition to God's plans and purposes,—he often makes them the objects of his special displeasure; giving them up to the hardness of their hearts, and postponing their destruction, to make it more impressively manifest to the world. In every respect Pharaoh was a most appropriate example to illustrate the case of the body of the unbelieving Jews, who, when the Apostle wrote, were under the sentence of a terrible excision. Pharaoh had several times hardened his own heart; now God hardens it; that is, in Scripture language, withdraws his all-gracious interposition, and gives him up. So the Jews had hardened their hearts against repeated calls of Christ and his Apostles; now God was about to give them up, as a nation, to destruction. Pharaoh was not suddenly cut off, but was spared: "For this same purpose have I raised thee up" from the effect of so many plagues; that is, I have not destroyed thee outright. The LXX. translate, "Thou hast been preserved;" for the Hebrew word rendered by us, "raised up," never signifies to bring a person or thing into being, but to preserve, support, establish, or make to stand. So, also, the Jews had not been instantly cut off; but had been "endured with much longsuffering," to give them an opportunity of repentance, of which many availed themselves; and the remainder were still endured, though they were filling up the measure of their iniquities, and would, in the end, but by their own fault, display more eminently the justice and severity of God. Pharaoh's crowning offence was his rebellious opposition to the designs of God in taking Israel out of Egypt, and establishing them in Canaan as an independent nation, and as the church of God; the Jews filled up the measure of their iniquities by endeavouring to withstand the purpose of God as to the Gentiles; his purpose to elect a church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, only on the ground of faith; and this made the cases parallel. Therefore, says the Apostle, it follows from all these examples, that "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," gives special religious advantages to those



whom he wills to elect for this purpose ; “ and whom he will,” whom he chooses to select as examples from among notorious sinners who rebelliously oppose his designs, “ he hardeneth,” or gives up to a hardness which they themselves have cherished. In verse 19 the Jew is again introduced as an objector : “ Thou wilt then say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault ? for who hath resisted his will ?” And to this St. Paul answers, “ Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ?” (Verse 20.) The usual way in which this objection is explained, by non-Calvinistic commentators, is,—if the continuance of the Jews in a state of disobedience was the consequence of the determination of God to leave them to themselves, why should God still find fault ? If they had become obdurate by the judicial withholding of his grace, why should the Jews still be blamed, since his will had not been resisted, but accomplished ? If this be the sense of the objection, then the import of the Apostle’s answer will be, that it is both perverse and wicked for a nation justly given up to obduracy, “ to reply against God,” or debate the case with him ; and that it ought silently at least to submit to its penal dereliction, recollecting that God has an absolute power over nations, not only to raise them to peculiar honours and privileges, and to take them away, as “ the potter has power over the clay to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour ;” but to leave them to fill up the measure of their sins, that his judgments may be the more conspicuous. That this is a better and more consistent sense than that forced upon these words by Calvinistic commentators, may be freely admitted ; but it is not wholly satisfactory. For,

1. One sees not what can be expected from a people judicially given up, but a “ replying against God ;” or what end is to be answered by taking any pains to teach a people, in this hopeless case, not “ to reply against God,” but suffer his judgments in silence.

2. As little discoverable, if this be the meaning, is the appropriateness of the Apostle’s allusion to the parable of the potter, in Jeremiah, chap. xviii. There Almighty God declares

his absolute power over nations to give them what form and condition he pleases ; but still under these rules, that he repents of the evil which he threatens against wicked nations, when they repent, and withdraws his blessings from them when they are abused. But this illustration is surely not appropriate to the case of a nation given up to final obduracy, because the parable of the potter supposes the time of trial, as to such nations, not yet passed. “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter ? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it ; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it ; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.” There is here no allusion to nations being kept in a state of judicial dereliction and obduracy, in order to make their punishment more conspicuous.

3. When the Apostle speaks of the potter making of the “same lump, one vessel to honour and another to dishonour,” the last term does not fully apply to the state of a people devoted to inevitable destruction. It is true, that in a following verse he speaks of “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ;” but that is another view of the case of the Jews, as we shall immediately show ; nor does he affirm that they were “fitted to destruction” by God. There he speaks of what men fit themselves for ; or that fitness for the infliction of the divine wrath upon them, which they themselves, by their perverseness, create. Here he speaks of an act of God, using the figure of a potter forming some vessels “to honour, others to dishonour.” But dishonour is not destruction. No potter makes vessels to destroy them ; and we may be certain, that when Jeremiah went down to the potter’s house, to see him work the clay upon the wheel, that the potter was not employed in forming vessels to destroy them. On the con-

trary, says the Prophet, when the lump of clay was "marred in his hand," so that, not for want of skill in himself, but of proper quality in the clay, it took not the form he designed; of the same lump he made "another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make it;" a meaner vessel, as the inferior quality or temper of the clay admitted, instead of that finer and more ornamental form which it would not take. The application of this was natural and easy to the house of Israel. It had become a lump of marred clay in the hands of the potter, which answered not to his design, and yielded not to his will. This illustrated the case of the Jews, previous to the captivity of Babylon: They were marred in his hand, they were not answering the design for which he made them a people; but then the potter gave the stubborn clay another, though a baser, form, and did not cast it away from him: He put the Jews into the condition of slaves and captives in a strange land, and reduced them from their honourable rank among the nations. This might have been averted by their repentance; but when the clay became utterly marred, it was turned into this inferior and less honourable form and state. But all this was not excision, not destruction. The proceeding was corrective, as well as punitive; it brought them to repentance in Babylon; and God "repented him of the evil." The potter took even that vessel which had been made unto dishonour for seventy years, and made of it again "a vessel unto honour," by restoring the polity and church-relation of the Jews.

4. The interpretation to which these objections are made also supposes that the body of the Jewish nation had arrived at a state of dereliction already. But this Epistle was written several years before the destruction of Jerusalem; and although the threatening had gone forth, as to the dereliction and hardening of the perseveringly impenitent, it is plain, from the labours of the Apostle himself to convert the Jews everywhere, and from his "prayers, that Israel might be saved," (chap. x. 1,) that he did not consider them, as yet at least, in this condition; though most of them, and especially those in Judea, were hastening to it.



Let us, then, take a view of this part of the Apostle's discourse, in some respects different. The objecting Jew, upon the Apostle having stated that God shows mercy, or special favour, to whom he will, and selects out of the mass of sinners whom he pleases, for marked and eminent punishment, says, "Why doth he yet find fault?" "Why does he, by you, his messenger, allowing your apostolic commission, continue to reprove and blame the Jews? For who hath resisted his will? According to your own doctrine, he chooses the Gentiles, and rejects us; his will is accomplished, not resisted: Why, then, doth he still find fault?" We may grant that the objection of the Jew goes upon the Calvinistic view of sovereignty and predestination, and the shutting out of all conditions; but then it is to be remembered, that it is the objection of a perverse and unbelieving Jew; and that it is refuted, not conceded, by the Apostle; for he proceeds wholly to cut off all ground and pretence of replying against God, by his reference to the parable of the potter in Jeremiah. This reference, according to the view we have already given of that parable, shows, 1. That "the vessel" was not made "unto dishonour," until the clay of which it was formed had been "marred in the hand of the potter;" that is, not until, trial being made, it did not conform to his design, did not work according to the pattern in his mind. This is immediately explained by the Prophet; the nation did not repent, and turn from its wickedness, and therefore God dealt with them as seemed good to him. Thus, in the time of the Apostle, the Jewish nation was the clay marred in the hands of God. From its stubbornness and want of temper, it had not conformed to his design of bringing it to the honourable form of a Christian church, in association with the Gentiles. It was, therefore, made "a vessel unto dishonour," unchurched, and disowned of God, as its forefathers had been in Babylon. This was the dishonoured, degraded condition of all the unbelieving Jews in the Apostle's day, although the destruction of their city, and temple, and polity, had not taken place. They were rejected from being the visible church of God from the rending of the veil of the temple, or, at least, from the day

of Pentecost, when God visibly took possession of his new spiritual church, by the descent of the Holy Ghost. But all this was their own fault ; and, therefore, notwithstanding the objection of the perverse Jew, fault might be found with those who spurned the glory of a higher church-estate than that which their circumcision formerly gave, and which had been so long and so affectionately offered to them ;—with men who not only would not enter the kingdom of God themselves, but attempted to hinder even the Gentiles from entering in, as far as lay in their power.

2. The reference to the parable of the potter served to silence their replying against God also ; because, in the interpretation which Jeremiah gives of that parable, he represents even the vessel formed unto dishonour out of the mass which was “ marred in the hand of the potter,” as still within the reach of the divine favour, upon repentance ; and so the conduct of God to the Jews, instead of proceeding, as the Jew in his objection supposes, upon rigid predestinarian and unconditional grounds, left their state still in their own hands : They had no need to remain vessels of dishonour, since the Christian church was still open to them, with its higher than Jewish honours. The word of the Lord, by his Prophet, immediately on his having visited the potter’s house, declares, that if a nation repent, he will repent of the evil designed against or brought upon it. The Jews in Babylon, although they were there in the form of dishonoured vessels, did repent ; and of that dishonoured mass vessels of honour were again made, at their restoration to their own land. Instead of replying against God, they bowed to his judgments in silence ; and, as we read in the prayer of Daniel, confessed them just. Every Jew had this option when the Apostle wrote, and has it now ; and, therefore, St. Paul does not here call upon the Jews, as persons hardened and derelict of God, to be silent, and own the justice of God ; but as persons whose silent submission would be the first step to their recovery. Nor will they always, even as a people, remain vessels of dishonour ; but be formed again on the potter’s wheel as vessels of honour and glory, of which the return from Babylon was probably a type.

The object of the Apostle was, therefore, to silence a rebellious and perverse replying against God, by producing a conviction, both of his sovereign right to dispense his favours as he pleases, and of his justice in inflicting punishments upon those who set themselves against his designs; and thus to bring the Jews to repentance.

3. What follows (verse 22) serves further, and by another view, to silence the objecting Jew. It was true, that the body of the Jewish people in Judea, and their polity, would be destroyed: Our Lord had predicted it; and the Apostles frequently, but tenderly, advert to it. This prediction did not, however, prove that the Jews were, at the time the Apostle wrote, generally, in a state of entire and hopeless dereliction; or the Apostle would not so earnestly have sought, and so fervently have prayed, for their salvation. Nor did that event itself prove, that those who still remained, and to this day remain, were given up entirely by God; for if so, why should the church have been, in all ages, taught to look for their restoration,—no time being fixed, and no signs established, to enable us to conclude that the dereliction had been taken off? The temporal punishment of the Jews of Judea had no connexion with the question of their salvability as a people. To this sad national event, however, the Apostle adverts in the next verses: “What,” or besides, “if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, who were not my people,” &c. (Verses 22—25.) The Apostle does not state his conclusion, but leaves it to be understood. He intended it, manifestly, further to silence the perverse objections of the Jews; and he gives it as a proof, not of sovereignty alone, but of sovereignty and justice; sovereign mercy to the Gentiles, but justice to the Jews: As though he had said, This procedure is also righteous, and leaves no room to reply against God.



The metaphor of vessels is still carried on ; but by “vessels of dishonour, formed by the potter,” and “vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction,” he does not mean vessels in the same condition, but in different conditions. This is plain, from the difference of expression adopted,—“vessels unto dishonour,” and “vessels of wrath ;” but as the Apostle’s reasoning is evidently influenced by the reference he had made to the parables of the potter, in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Jeremiah, we must again refer to that prophecy for illustration. In all the examples which, in this discourse, St. Paul takes out of the Old Testament, it has been justly observed by critics, that he quotes briefly, and only so as to give to the Jews, who were well acquainted with their Scriptures, the key to the whole context in which the passages stand to which he directs their attention. So in the verses before us, by referring to the potter forming the vessels on the wheel, he directs them to the whole section of prophecy of which that is the introduction. By examining this it will be found, that the Prophet, in delivering his message, makes use of the work of the potter for illustration, in two states, and for two purposes. The first we have explained,—the giving to the mass, marred in the hands of the potter, another form ; which expressed that dishonoured and humbled state in which the Jews, both for punishment and correction, were placed under captivity in Babylon. But connected with the humbling of this proud people, by rejecting them for seventy years, as God’s visible church, was also the terrible destruction of Jerusalem and the temple itself. With reference to this, the Prophet, in the nineteenth chapter, which is a continuation of the eighteenth, receives this command : “Thus saith the Lord, Go and get a potter’s earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the Priests ; and go forth unto the valley of the sons of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, and say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O Kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem ; Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.”

And then, having delivered his awful message in various forms of malediction, he is thus commanded, in verse 10: "Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again." As this stands in the same section of prophecy as the parable of the forming of vessels out of clay by the potter, can it be doubted to what the Apostle refers when he speaks, not only of "vessels made unto dishonour," but also of "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" The potter's earthen bottle, broken by Jeremiah, was "a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction," though not in the intention of the potter who formed it; and the breaking or destruction of it represented, as the Prophet himself says, the destruction of the city, temple, and polity of the Jews, by the invasion of the forces of the King of Babylon. The coming destruction of the temple, city, and polity of the Jews by the Romans was thereby fitly represented by the same figure in words, that is, the destruction of an earthen vessel by violent fracture, as the former calamity had been represented by it in action. Further, the circumstances of these two great national punishments signally answer to each other. In the former, the Jews ceased to be the visible church of God for seventy years; in the latter, they have been also unchurched for many ages. Their temporary rejection as the visible church of God, when they were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, was marked, also, by circumstances of severe and terrible vengeance, by invasion, and the destruction of their political state. Their longer rejection, as God's church, was also accompanied by judgments of the same kind, and by their more terrible excision and dispersion as a body politic. As the Prophet refers to both circumstances, so, in his usual manner of teaching by action, he illustrates both by symbols. The first, by the work of the potter on the wheels; the second, by taking "an earthen bottle, a vessel out of the house of the potter, and destroying it before the eyes of the ancients of the people and the ancients of the Priests." The Apostle, in like manner, refers to both events, and makes use of the same

symbols verbally. The dishonoured state of the Jews, no longer acknowledged by God as his people, since they would not enter the new church, the new Jerusalem, by faith, is shown by the vessel formed by the potter unto dishonour; the collateral calamities brought upon their city, temple, and nation, arising out of their enormous sins, is shown by allusion to the Prophet's breaking another vessel, an earthen bottle. This temporal destruction of the Jews by the Roman invasion, was also figurative of the future and final punishment of all persevering unbelievers. As to the Jews of that day living in Judea, the nation of the Jews, the punishment figured by the broken vessel was final, for they were destroyed by the sword, and wasted by slavery; and as to all who persevered in unbelief, the future punishment in eternity would be final and hopeless, "as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again;" a sufficient proof that St. Paul is not speaking of the vessel in its state of clay, on the potter's wheel, which might be made whole again; and, therefore, the punishment figured by that was not final, but corrective; for the Jews, though made vessels unto dishonour in Babylon, were again made vessels of honour on their restoration; and the Jews now, though for a much longer period existing as "vessels of dishonour," shall be finally restored, brought into the church of Christ, acknowledged to be his people, as the believing Gentiles are, and thus, united with them, again be made "vessels unto honour."

The application of the Apostle's words in the verses just commented upon, as intended to silence the replying of the Jews against God, is now obvious. They could urge no charge upon God for making them vessels of dishonour by taking away their church-state, for that was their own fault; they were "marred in his hands," and they yielded not to his design. But their case was no more hopeless than that of the Jews in Babylon; they might still be again made vessels of honour. And then, as to the case of the "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction," those stubborn Jews, who were bringing upon themselves the Roman invasion, with the destruction of their city and nation; and all perverse, unbelieving Jews, who con-



tinued, in other parts of the world, to reject the Gospel; although their approaching punishment would be final and remediless, yet was there no ground for them to reply against God on that account, as though this dispensation of wrath were the result of unconditional predestination and rigid sovereignty. On the contrary, it was an act of pure and unquestionable justice, which the Apostle proves by its being brought upon themselves by their own sins; and by the circumstance that it did not take place until after God had “endured them with much longsuffering.”

1. The destruction was brought upon themselves by their own sins. This is manifest from all the instances in the New Testament, in which their sins are charged upon them as the cause of their calamities, and which need not be quoted; and also from the expression in the text before us, vessels “fitted to destruction.” The word might as well have been rendered “adapted to destruction,” which fitness or congruity for punishment can be produced only by sin; and this sin must have been their own choice and fault, unless we should blasphemously make God the author of sin, which but a few Calvinistic Divines have been bold enough to affirm. Nor are we to overlook the change of speech which the Apostle uses\* when speaking of “the vessels of mercy.” Their “preparation unto glory” is ascribed expressly to God,—“which he had afore prepared unto glory;” but of the vessels of wrath, the Apostle simply says, passively, “fitted to destruction,” leaving the agent to be inferred from the nature of the thing, and from the testimony of Scripture, which uniformly ascribes the sins of men to themselves, and their punishment to their sins.

2. The justice of God’s proceeding as to the incorrigible Jews is still more strongly marked by the declaration, that these vessels of wrath, fitted or adapted to destruction, were “endured with much longsuffering.” To say that their punishment was delayed to render it more conspicuous, after they had been left or given up by God, would be no impeach-

ment of God's justice ; but it is much more consonant to the tenor of Scripture to consider the "longsuffering" here mentioned as exercised previously to their being given up to the hardness of their hearts, like Pharaoh, and even after they were, in a rigid construction of just severity, "fitted for destruction ;" the punishment being delayed to afford them still further opportunities for repentance. The barren tree, in our Lord's parable, was the emblem of the Jewish nation ; and no one can deny that after the Lord had come for many years "seeking fruit and finding none," this fruitless tree was fitted to be cut down ; and yet it was "endured with much longsuffering." This view is also further supported by the import of the word "longsuffering," and its use in the New Testament. Longsuffering is a mode of mercy, and the reason of its exercise is only to be found in a merciful intention. Hence "goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering," are united by the Apostle in another part of this Epistle, when speaking of these very Jews in a passage which may be considered as strictly parallel with that before us : "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;" which wrath the longsuffering of God was exercised to prevent, by leading them "to repentance." (Rom. ii. 4, 5.) So also St. Peter teaches us, that the end of God's longsuffering to men is a merciful one : He is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The passage in question, therefore, cannot be understood of persons derelict and forsaken of God, as though the longsuffering of God in enduring them were a part of the process of "showing his wrath, and making his power known." Doddridge, a moderate Calvinist, paraphrases it, " 'What, if God, resolving' at last 'to manifest his wrath, and make his power known, hath,' in the meantime, 'endured with much longsuffering' those who shall finally appear to be 'the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ?' " to which there is no objection, provided

it be allowed that in this "meantime" they might have repented and obtained mercy.

Thus the proceedings of God as to the Jews shut out all reply and debate with God. Nothing was unjust in his conduct to the impenitent among them; for they were "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction," wicked men justly liable to it; and yet, before God proceeded to his work of judgment, he endured them with forbearance, and gave them many opportunities of coming into his church on the new election of believers, both of Jews and Gentiles. And as to this election, the whole was a matter, not of justice, but of grace; for God had the unquestionable right of forming a new believing people, "not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," and of filling them, as vessels of honour, with those riches, that fulness of glory, as his now acknowledged church, for which he had afore prepared them by faith, the only ground of their admission into his covenant. The remainder of the chapter, on which we have commented, contains citations from the prophecies, with respect to the salvation of the remnant of the believing Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. The tenth and eleventh chapters, which continue the discourse, need no particular examination; but will be found to contain nothing but what most obviously refers to the rejection of the Jewish nation, and the election of the remnant of believing Jews, along with all believing Gentiles, into the visible church of God.

We have now considered this discourse of the Apostle Paul, with reference to the question of personal or collective election, and find that it can be interpreted only of the latter. Let us consider it, secondly, with reference to the question of unconditional election, a doctrine which we shall certainly find in it; but in a sense very different from that in which it is held by the Calvinists.

By unconditional election, Divines of this class understand an election of persons to eternal life without respect to their faith or obedience, these qualities in them being supposed necessarily to follow as consequences of their election. By unconditional reprobation, the counterpart of the former doctrine, is meant a non-election or rejection of certain persons



from eternal salvation ; unbelief and disobedience following this rejection as necessary consequences. Such kind of election and reprobation has no place in this chapter, although the subject of it is the election and rejection of bodies of men, which is a case more unfettered with conditions than any other. We have, indeed, in it several instances of unconditional election. Such was that of the descendants of Isaac to be God's visible church, in preference to those of Ishmael : Such was that of Jacob, to the exclusion of Esau ; which election was declared when the children were yet in the womb, before they had done good or evil ; so that the blessing of the special covenant did not descend upon the posterity of Jacob, because of any righteousness in Jacob, nor was it taken away from the descendants of Esau because of any wickedness in their progenitor. In like manner, when Almighty God determined no longer to found his visible church upon natural descent from Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob, nor in any line according to the flesh, but to make faith in his Son Jesus Christ the gate of admission into this privilege, he acted according to the same sovereign pleasure. It is not impossible to conceive that he might have carried on his saving purposes among the Gentiles through Christ, without setting up a visible church among them ; as before the coming of Christ he carried on such purposes in the Gentile nations, (unless we suppose that all but the Jews perished,) without collecting them into a body, and making himself their head as his church, and calling himself " their God " by special covenant, and by visible and constant signs acknowledging them to be " his people." Greatly inferior would have been the mercy to the Gentile world had this plan been adopted ; and, as far as it appears to us, the system of Christianity would have been much less efficient. We are, indeed, bound to believe this, since divine wisdom and goodness have determined on another mode of procedure ; but still it is conceivable. On the contrary, the purpose of God was now not only to continue a visible church in the world, but to extend it in its visible, collective, and organized form, into all nations. Yet this resolve rested on no goodness in those who were to be the subjects of it ; both Jews and Gentiles were

“concluded under sin,” and “the whole world was guilty before God.” As this plan is carried into effect by extending the Gospel into different nations, we see the same sovereign pleasure. A man of Macedonia appears to Paul in a vision by night, and cries, “Come over and help us ;” but we have no reason to believe that the Macedonians were better than other Gentiles, although they were elected to the enjoyment of the privileges and advantages of evangelical ordinances. So in modern times parts of Hindostan have been elected to receive the Gospel, and yet its inhabitants presented nothing more worthy of this election than the people of Tibet, or California, who have not yet been elected. We call this “sovereignty ;” not, indeed, in the sense of many Calvinistic writers, who appear to understand by the sovereign acts of God those procedures which he adopts only to show that he has the power to execute them ; but because the reasons of them, whether they are reasons of judgment, or wisdom, or mercy, are hidden from us ; either because we have no immediate interest in them, or that they are too deep and ample for our comprehension, or because it is an important lesson for men to be taught to bow with reverent submission to his regal prerogatives. This is the unconditional election and non-election taught by the Apostle in this chapter ; but we deny that either the spiritual blessings connected with religious privileges follow as necessary consequences from this election ; or that unbelief, disobedience, and eternal ruin follow in the same manner from non-election. Of both these opinions the Apostle’s discourse itself furnishes abundant refutation.

Let us take the instances of election. The descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob were elected ; but true faith, and obedience, and salvation, did not follow as infallible consequents of that election. On the contrary, the Jew outwardly, and the Jew inwardly, were always distinguished in the sight of God ; and the children of Abraham’s faith, not the children of Abraham’s body, were the true Israel of God. Again : The Gentiles were at length elected to be the visible church of God ; but obedience and salvation did not follow as necessary consequents of this election. On the contrary, many

Gentiles chosen to special religious privileges have, in all ages, neglected the great salvation, and have perished, though professing the name of Christ; and in that pure age in which St. Paul wrote, when comparatively few Gentiles entered the church but with a sincere faith in Christ, he warns all of the danger of excision for unbelief and disobedience: "Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear." "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." "Toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Certain, therefore, it is, that although this collective election of bodies of men to religious privileges, and to become the visible church of God, be unconditional, the salvation to which these privileges were designed to lead, depends upon personal faith and obedience.

Let us turn, then, to the instances of non-election or rejection; and here it will be found that unbelief, disobedience, and punishment do not follow as infallible consequents of this dispensation. Abraham was greatly interested for Ishmael, and obtained, in answer to his prayer, at least temporal promises in his behalf, and in that of his posterity; and there is no reason to conclude, from any thing which occurs in the sacred writers, that his Arabian descendants were shut out, except by their own choice and fault, at any time from the hopes of salvation, at least previous to their embracing the imposture of Mahomet; for if so, we must give up Job and his friends as reprobates. The knowledge of the true God existed long in Arabia; and Arabians were among the fruits of primitive Christianity, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles.

Nor have we any ground to conclude that the Edomites, as such, were excluded from the mercies of God, because of their non-election as his visible church. Their proximity to the Jewish nation must have served to preserve among them a considerable degree of religious knowledge; and their continuance as a people for many ages may argue, at least, no great enormity of wickedness among them; which is confirmed by the reasons given for their ultimate destruction. The final malediction against this people is uttered by the Prophet Malachi:



“Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places ; thus saith the Lord of Hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down ; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.” (Mal. i. 4.) Thus their destruction was the result of their wickedness in the later periods of their history ; nor have we any reason to conclude, that this was more inevitable than that of other ancient nations, whom God, as in the case of Assyria, called to repentance, but who, not regarding the call, were finally destroyed. That the Edomites were not, in more ancient times, the objects of the divine displeasure, is manifest from Deuteronomy ii. 5, where it is recorded that God commanded the Israelites, “Meddle not with them ; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth ; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.” They also outlived, as a people, the ten tribes of Israel ; they continued to exist when the two tribes were carried into captivity to Babylon ; and about the year of the world 3875, or 129 before the Christian era, John Hyrcanus entirely subdued them, and obliged them to incorporate with the Jewish nation and to receive its religion. They professed, consequently, the same faith, and were thus connected with the visible church of God.\*

We come, finally, to the case of the rejected Jews in the very age of the Apostles. The purpose of God, as we have seen, was to abolish the former ground on which his visible church had for so many ages been built, that of natural descent from Abraham by Isaac and Jacob ; but this was so far from shutting out the Jews from spiritual blessings, that though, as Jews, they were now denied to be God’s church, yet they were all invited to come in with the Gentiles, or rather to lead the way into the new church established on the new principle of

\* “Having conquered the Edomites, or Idumeans,” says Prideaux, “he reduced them to this necessity, either to embrace the Jewish religion, or else to leave the country and seek new dwellings elsewhere ; whereon, choosing rather to leave their idolatry than their country, they all became proselytes to the Jewish religion,” &c.—*Connex.*, vol. iii., pp. 365, 366.

faith in Jesus, as the Christ. Hence the Apostles were commanded to begin at Jerusalem to preach the Gospel; hence they made the Jews the first offers of grace in every place in Asia Minor, and other parts of the Roman empire, into which they travelled on the same blessed errand. Many of the Jews accepted the call, entered into the church-state on the new principle on which the church of Christ was now to be elected, and hence they are called, by St. Paul, "the remnant according to the election of grace," (Rom. xi. 5,) and "the election." The rest, it is true, are said to have been blinded; just in the same sense as Pharaoh was hardened. He hardened his own heart, and was judicially left to his obduracy; they blinded themselves by their prejudices, and worldliness, and spiritual pride, and were at length judicially given up to blindness. But, then, might they not all have had a share in this new election into this new church of God? Truly, every one of them; for thus the Apostle argues: "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." (Rom. ix. 30—32.) And thus we have it plainly declared that they were excluded from the new spiritual church of God, not by any act of sovereignty, not by any decree of reprobation, but by an act of their own: They rejected the doctrine and way of faith; they attained not unto righteousness, because they sought it not by faith.

The collective election and rejection taught in this chapter is not then unconditional, in the sense of the Calvinists; and neither the salvation of the people elected, nor the condemnation of the people rejected, flows as necessary consequents from these acts of the divine sovereignty. They are, indeed, mysterious procedures; for doubtless it must be allowed that they place some portions of men in circumstances more favoured than others; but even in such cases God has shut out the charge of "unrighteousness," by requiring from men according "to what they have, and not according to what they have not,"

as we learn from many parts of Scripture which reveal the principles of the divine administration, both as to this life and another ; for no man is shut out from the mercy of God, but by his own fault. He has connected these events also with wise and gracious general plans, as to the human race. They are not acts of arbitrary will, or of caprice ; they are acts of wisdom and knowledge, the mysterious bearings of which are to be in future times developed. “ O the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” These are the devout expressions with which St. Paul concludes this discourse ; but they would ill apply to the sovereign, arbitrary, and unconditional reprobation of men from God’s mercies in time and eternity, on the principle of taking some and leaving others without any reason in themselves. There is no plan in this ; no wisdom, no mystery ; and it is capable of no further developement for the instruction and benefit of the world ; for that which rests originally on no reason, but solely on arbitrary will, is incapable, from its very nature, of becoming the component part of a deeply-laid and, for a time, mysterious plan, which is to be brightened into manifest wisdom, and to terminate in the good of mankind, and the glory of God.

The only argument of any weight which is urged to prove, that in the election spoken of in this discourse of St. Paul, individuals are intended, is, that though it should be allowed that the Apostle is speaking of the election of bodies of men to be the visible church of God ; yet, as none are acknowledged by him to be his true church, except true believers ; therefore, the election of men to faith and eternal life, as individuals, must necessarily be included ; or rather, is the main thing spoken of. For as the spiritual seed of Abraham were the only persons allowed to be “ the Israel of God ” under the Old Testament dispensation ; and as, upon the rejection of the Jews, true believers only, both of Jews and Gentiles, were allowed to constitute the church of Christ, the spiritual seed of Abraham, under the law ; therefore, genuine Christians, both of Jews and Gentiles, under the Gospel, are “ the elec-



tion," and "the remnant according to the election of grace," mentioned by the Apostle.

In this argument truth is greatly mixed up with error; but a few observations will disentangle it.

1. It is a mere assumption, that the spiritual Israelites, under the law, in opposition to the Israelites by birth, are any where called "the election," and "the remnant according to the election of grace," or even alluded to under these titles. The first phrase occurs in Romans xi. 7: "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Here it is evident that "the election" means the Jews of that day who believed in Christ, in opposition to "the rest" who believed not; in other words, "the election" was that part of the Jews who had been chosen into the Christian church by faith. The second phrase occurs in verse 5 of the same chapter: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace;" where the same class of persons, the believing Jews, who submitted to the plan of election into the church "by grace" through faith, are the only persons spoken of. Nor are these terms used to designate the believing Gentiles; they belong exclusively to the Christianized portion of the Jewish nation; and as the contrary assumption is without any foundation, the inferences drawn from it are imaginary.

2. It is true that, under the Old Testament dispensation, the spiritual seed of Abraham were the only part of the Israelites who were, with reference to their spiritual and eternal state, accepted of God; but it is not true, that the election of which the Apostle speaks was confined to them. With reference to Esau and Jacob, the Apostle says, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Rom. ix. 11—13.) The "election" here spoken of, or God's purpose to elect, relates to Jacob being chosen in preference to Esau; which election,

as we have seen, respected the descendants of Jacob. Now, if this meant the election of the pious descendants of Jacob only, and not his natural descendants, then the opposition between the election of the progeny of Jacob, and the non-election of the progeny of Esau, is destroyed; and there was no reason to say, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," or loved less; but, The pious descendants of Jacob have I loved and elected; and the rest I have not loved, and therefore have not elected. Some of the Calvinistic commentators have felt this difficulty, and therefore say, that these cases are not given as examples of the election and reprobation of which the Apostle speaks, but as illustrations of it. If considered as illustrations, they must be felt to be of a very perplexing kind; for how the preference of one nation to another can illustrate the election of individuals to eternal life, and the reprobation of other individuals to eternal death, is difficult to conceive, when, as we have seen, this did not infallibly secure the salvation of the more favoured nation, nor the eternal destruction of the less favoured. But they are manifestly examples of that one election, of which the Apostle speaks throughout; and not illustrations of one kind of election by another. They are the instances which he gives in proof that the election of the believing Jews of his day to be, along with the believing Gentiles, the visible church of God, and the rejection of the Jews after the flesh, was not contrary to the promises of God made to Abraham; because God had, in former times, made distinctions between the natural descendants of Abraham as to church privileges, without any impeachment of his faithfulness to his word. Again: If the election of which the Apostle speaks were that of pious Jews in all ages, so that they alone stood in a church-relation to God, and were thus the only Jews in covenant with him; how could he speak of the rejection of the other portion of the Jews? of their being cut off? and of the covenants pertaining to them? They could not be rejected, who were never received; nor cut off, who were never branches in the stock; nor have covenants pertaining to them, if in these covenants they had never been included.

3. This notion, that the ancient election of a part of the descendants of Abraham spoken of by the Apostle was of the pious Jews only, and therefore a personal election, is, in part, grounded by these commentators upon a mistaken view of the meaning of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth verses of this chapter; in which they have been sometimes incautiously followed by those of very different sentiments, who have thus somewhat entangled themselves. "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise: At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son." In this passage, the interpreters in question suppose that St. Paul distinguishes between the spiritual Israelites, and those of natural descent; between the spiritual seed of Abraham, and his seed according to the flesh. Yet the passage not only affords no evidence that this was his intention, but implies just the contrary. Our view of its meaning is given above; but it may be necessary to support it more fully.

Let it, then, be recollected, that the Apostle is speaking of that great event, the rejection of the Jews from being any longer the visible church of God, on account of natural descent; and that in this passage he shows that the purpose of God to construct his church upon a new basis, that of faith in Christ, although it would exclude the body of the Jewish people from this church, since they refused "the election of grace" through faith, would not prove that the word of God had fallen to the ground, or, as the literal meaning of the original is rendered in our version, "has taken none effect." The word of God referred to can only be God's original promise to Abraham, to be a God to him and to his seed after him; which was often repeated to the Jews in after ages, in the covenant engagement: "I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people;" a mode of expression which signifies, in all the connexions in which it stands, an engagement to acknowledge them as his



visible church : He being publicly acknowledged on their part as their God, or object of worship and trust ; and they, on the other, being acknowledged by him as his peculiar people. This, therefore, we are to take to be the sense of the promise to Abraham and to his seed. How, then, does the Apostle prove that the word of God had not fallen to the ground, although the natural seed of Abraham, the Jews of that day, had been rejected as his church ? He proves it by showing that all the children of Abraham by natural descent had not, in the original intention of the promise, been “counted,” or reckoned, “as the seed” to which these promises had been made ; and this he establishes by referring to those acts of God by which he had, in his sovereign pleasure, conferred the church-relation upon the descendants of Abraham only in certain lines, as in those of Isaac and Jacob, and excluded the others. In this view, the argument is cogent to his purpose. By the exercise of the same sovereignty God had now resolved not to connect the church-relation with natural descent, though in the line of Isaac and Jacob ; but to establish it on a ground which might comprehend the Gentile nations also, the common ground of faith in Christ. The mere children of the flesh were, therefore, in this instance, excluded ; and “the children of the promise,” the promise now made to believing Jews and Gentiles, those begotten by the word of the Gospel, were “counted for the seed.” But though it is a great truth, that only the children of the Gospel promise are now “counted for the seed ;” it does not follow that the children of the promise made to Sarah were all spiritual persons, and, as such, the only subjects of that church-relation which was connected with that circumstance. That the Gentiles who believed upon the publication of the Gospel were always contemplated as a part of that seed to which the promises were made, the Apostle shows in a former part of the same Epistle ; but that “mystery” was not in early times revealed. God had not then formed, nor did he till the Apostle’s age form, his visible church solely on the principle of faith and a moral relation. This is the character of the new, not of the old, dispensation ; and the different grounds of the church-relation

were suited to the design of each. One was to preserve truth from extinction; the other to extend it into all nations: In one, therefore, a single people, taken as a nation into political as well as religious relations with God, was made the deposit of the truth to be preserved; in the other, a national distinction, and lines of natural descent, could not be recognised, because the object was to call all nations to the obedience of the same faith, and to place all on an equality before God. As the very ground of the church-relation, then, under the Old Testament, was natural descent from Abraham; and as it was mixed up and even identified with a political relation also, the ancient election of which the Apostle speaks could not be confined to spiritual Jews; and even if it could be proved, that the church of God, under the new dispensation, is to be confined to true believers only, yet that would not prove that the ancient church of God had that basis alone, since we know it had another, and a more general one. When, therefore, the Apostle says, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel," the distinction is not between the spiritual and the natural Israelites, but between that part of the Israelites who continued to enjoy church-privileges, and those who were "of Israel," or the descendants of Jacob who was surnamed Israel, as the ten tribes and parts of the two, who, being dispersed among the Heathen, for their sins, were no longer a part of God's visible church. This is the first instance which the Apostle gives of the rejection of a part of the natural seed of Abraham from the promise. He strengthens the argument by going up higher, even to those who had immediately been born to Abraham, the very children of his body, Ishmael and Isaac. "The children of the flesh," that is, Ishmael and his descendants, (so called, because he was born naturally, not supernaturally, as Isaac was, according to the promise made to Abraham and Sarah,)—they, says the Apostle, are not the "children of God;" that is, as the context still shows, not the seed to whom the promise that he would be "a God to Abraham and his seed" was made; "but the children of the promise," that is, Isaac and his descendants, were "counted for the seed." And that we might not mistake this, the promise referred to is

added by the Apostle: "For this is the word of the promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son." Of this promise, the Israelites by natural descent were as much "the children," as the spiritual Israelites; and, therefore, to confine it to the latter is wholly gratuitous, and contrary to the words of the Apostle. It is, indeed, an interesting truth, that a deep and spiritual mystery ran through that part of the history of Abraham here referred to, which the Apostle opens in his Epistle to the Galatians: "The children of the bond-woman and her son" symbolized the Jews who sought justification by the law; and "the children of the promise," "the children of the free-woman," those who were justified by faith, and born supernaturally, that is, "born again," and made heirs of the heavenly inheritance. But these things, says St. Paul, are an "allegory;" and therefore could not be the thing allegorized, any more than a type can be the thing typified; for a type is always of an inferior nature to the antitype, and is, indeed, something earthly, adumbrating that which is spiritual and heavenly. It follows, therefore, that although the choosing of Isaac and his descendants prefigured the choosing of true believers, (persons born supernaturally under the Gospel dispensation,) to be "the children of God;" and that the rejection of the "children of the flesh" typified the rejection of the unbelieving Jews from God's church, because they had nothing but natural descent to plead; nay, though we allow that these events might be allegorical, on one part, of the true believing Israelites, in all ages; and, on the other, of those who were Jews only "outwardly," and therefore, as to the heavenly inheritance, were not "heirs;" yet still that which typified, and represented in allegory, these spiritual mysteries, was not the spiritual mystery itself. It was a comparatively gross and earthly representation of it; and the passage is, therefore, to be understood of the election of the natural descendants of Isaac, as the children of the promise made to Sarah, to be the seed to which the promises of church-privileges and a church-relation were intended to be in force, though still subject to the election of the line of Jacob in preference to that of Esau; and subject again, at a still



greater distance of time, to the election of the tribe of Judah, to continue God's visible church, till the coming of Messiah, whilst the ten tribes, who were equally "of Israel," were rejected.

4. That this election of bodies of men to be the visible church of God, involved the election of individuals into the true church of God, and consequently their election to eternal life, is readily acknowledged; but this weakens not in the least the arguments by which we have shown that the Apostle, in this chapter, speaks of collective, and not of individual, election; on the contrary, it establishes them. Let us, to illustrate this, first take the case of the ancient Jewish church.

The end of God's election of bodies of men to peculiar religious advantages is, doubtless, as to the individuals of which these bodies are composed, their recovery from sin, and their eternal salvation. Hence, to all such individuals, superior means of instruction, and more efficient means of salvation, are afforded along with a deeper responsibility. The election of an individual into the true church by writing his name in heaven, is, however, an effect subsequent to the election of the body to which he belongs. It follows only from his personal repentance, and justifying faith; or else we must say, that men are members of the true spiritual church, before they repent and have justifying faith, for which, assuredly, we have no warrant in Scripture. Individual election is then another act of God, subsequent to the former. The former is sovereign and unconditional; the latter rests upon revealed reasons, and is not, as we shall just now more fully show, unconditional. These two kinds of election, therefore, are not to be confounded; and it is absurd to argue that collective election has no existence, because there is an individual election, since the latter, on the contrary, necessarily supposes the former. The Jews, as a body, had their visible church-state, and outward privileges, although the pious Jews alone availed themselves of them to their own personal salvation. As to the Christian church, there is a great difference in its circumstances; but the principle, though modified, is still there.

The basis of this church was to be, not natural descent from a common head ; marking out, as that church, some distinct family, tribe, and, as it increased in numbers, some one nation, invested too, as a nation must be, with a political character and state ; but faith in Christ. Yet even this faith supposes a previous sovereign and unconditional collective election. For, as the Apostle argues, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God : But how shall they hear without a Preacher ? And how shall they preach except they be sent ?” Now, this sending to one Gentile nation before another Gentile nation, a distinction which continues to be made in the administration of the divine government to this day, is that sovereign unconditional election of the people constituting that nation, to the means of becoming God’s church by the preaching of the Gospel, through the men sent to them for this purpose. The persons who first believed were, for the most part, real Christians, in the sense of being truly and in heart turned to God. They could not generally go so far as to be baptized into the name of Christ, in the face of persecution, and in opposition to their own former prejudices, without a considerable previous ripeness of experience, and decision of character. Under the name of saints, in the highest sense, the primitive churches are addressed in the apostolical Epistles ; and such we are bound to conclude they were, or they would not have been so called by men who had the “discernment of spirits.” Whatever, then, the number was, whether small or great, of those who first received the word of the Gospel in every place, they openly confessed Christ, and assembled for public worship ; and thus the promise was fulfilled in them, “I will be to them a God,” the object of worship and trust, “and they shall be to me a people.” They became God’s visible church ; and for the most part entered into that, and into the true and spiritual church, at the same time. But this was not the case with all the members ; and we have therefore still an election of bodies of men to a visible church-state, independent of their election as “heirs of eternal life.” The children of believers, even as children, and therefore incapable of faith, did not remain in the same state of alienation from

God as the children of unbelievers ; nay, though but one parent believed, yet the children are pronounced by St. Paul to be “ holy.” “ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife, by the husband ; else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy.” When both parents believed, and trained up their families to believe in Christ, and to worship the true God, the case was stronger : The family was then a church in the house ; though all the members of it might not have saving faith. Sincere faith, or assent to the Gospel, with desires of instruction and salvation, appear to have uniformly entitled the person to baptism ; and the use of Christian ordinances followed. The numbers of the visible church swelled till it comprehended cities, and at last countries, whose inhabitants were thus elected to special religious privileges, and, forsaking idols and worshipping God, constituted his visible church among Gentile nations. And that the Apostle Paul regarded all who “ called upon the name of the Lord ” as Christian churches, is evident from his asserting his authority over them for reproof, and counsel, and even excision, as to their unworthy members ; and also from his threatening the Gentile churches with the fate of the Jewish church ;—unless they stood by faith, they also should be “ cut off,” that is, be unchurched. Of his full meaning, subsequent history gives the elucidation in the case of those very churches in Asia Minor which he himself planted ; and which, departing from the faith of Christ, his true doctrine, have been, in many instances, “ cut off,” and swallowed up in the Mahomedan delusion, so that Christ is there no longer worshipped. The whole proves a sovereign unconditional election independent of personal election ; unconditional as to the people to whom the Gospel was first sent ; unconditional as to the children born of believing parents ; unconditional as to the inhabitants of those countries who, when a Christian church was first established among them, came, without seeking it, into the possession of invaluable and efficacious means and ordinances of Christian instruction and salvation ; and who all finally, by education, became professors of the true faith, and, as far as assent goes, sincere believers. This election, too, as in the



Jewish church, was made with reference to a personal election into the true spiritual church of God ; but personal election was conditional. It rested, as we have seen, upon personal repentance and justifying faith ; or else we must hold, that men could be members of the true church without either. The tenor of the Apostle's argument sufficiently shows that the transfer of the church state and relation from one body of men to others, is that which in this discourse he has in view ; in other words, he speaks of the election of bodies of men to religious advantages, not of individuals to eternal life ; and however intimately the one may be connected with the other, the latter is not necessarily involved in the former ; since superior religious privileges, in all ages, have, to many, proved but an aggravation of their condemnation.

The third kind of election is personal election ; or the election of individuals to be the children of God, and the heirs of eternal life.

It is not at all disputed between us and those who hold the Calvinistic view of election, whether believers in Christ are called "the elect of God" with reference to their individual state and individual relation to God as his people, in the highest sense of that phrase. Such passages as "the elect of God," "chosen of God," "chosen in Christ," "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and many others, we allow, therefore, although borrowed from that collective election of which we have spoken, to be descriptive of an act of grace in favour of certain persons considered individually.

The first question, then, which naturally arises, respects the import of that act of grace which is termed "choosing," or an election. It is not a choosing to particular offices and service, which is the first kind of election we have mentioned ; nor is it that collective election to religious privileges and a visible church-state, on which we have more largely dwelt. For although the elect have an individual interest in such an election as parts of the collective body, thus placed in possession of the ordinances of Christianity, yet many others have the same advantages, who still remain under the guilt and condemnation of sin and practical unbelief. The individuals

properly called “the elect,” are they who have been made partakers of the grace and saving efficacy of the Gospel. “Many,” says our Lord, “are called, but few chosen.”

What true personal election is, we shall find explained in two clear passages of Scripture. It is explained negatively by our Lord, where he says to his disciples, “I have chosen you out of the world:” It is explained positively by St. Peter, when he addresses his First Epistle “to the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.” To be elected, therefore, is to be separated from the world, and to be sanctified by the Spirit, and by the blood of Christ.

It follows, then, not only that election is an act of God done in time; but also that it is subsequent to the administration of the means of salvation. The calling goes before the election; the publication of the “doctrine of the Spirit,” and the atonement, called by Peter “the sprinkling of the blood of Christ,” before that sanctification through which they become the elect of God. The doctrine of eternal election is thus brought down to its true meaning. Actual election cannot be eternal; for, from eternity the elect were not actually chosen out of the world, and from eternity they could not be “sanctified unto obedience.” The phrases, “eternal election,” and “eternal decree of election,” so often in the lips of Calvinists, can, in common sense, therefore, mean only an eternal purpose to elect; or a purpose formed in eternity, to elect, or choose out of the world, and sanctify in time, by “the Spirit and the blood of Jesus.” This is a doctrine which no one will contend with them; but when they graft upon it another, that God hath from eternity “chosen in Christ, unto salvation” a set number of men,—*certam quorundam hominum multitudinem*,—not upon foresight of faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or of any other good quality or disposition, (as a cause or condition before required in man to be chosen,) but unto faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, &c.,—*non ex prævisâ fide, fideique obedientiâ, sanctitate, aut aliâ aliquâ bonâ qualitate et*

*dispositione, &c.,\**—it presents itself under a different aspect, and requires an appeal to the word of God.

This view of election has two parts : It is the choosing of a set or determinate number of men, who cannot be increased or diminished ; and it is unconditional. Let us consider each.

With respect to the first, there is no text of Scripture which teaches that a fixed and determinate number of men are elected to eternal life ; and the passages which the Synod of Dort adduce in proof, being such as they only infer the doctrine from, the Synod themselves allow that they have no express scriptural evidence for this tenet. But if there is no explicit Scripture in favour of the opinion, there is much against it ; and to this test it must, therefore, be brought.

The election here spoken of must either be election in eternity, or election in time. If the former, it can only mean a purpose of electing in time ; if the latter, it is actual election, or choosing out of the world.

Now, as to God's eternal purpose to elect, it is clear, that is a subject on which we can know nothing but from his own revelation. We take, then, the matter on this ground. A purpose to elect, is a purpose to save ; and when it is explicitly declared in this revelation that God "willeth all men to be saved," and that "he willeth not the death of a sinner," either we must say, that his will is contrary to his purpose, which would be to charge God foolishly, and, indeed, has no meaning at all ; or it agrees with his purpose : If, then, his will agrees with his purpose, that purpose was not confined to a "certain determinate number of men ;" but extended to all whosoever should believe, that they might be elected and saved.

Again : We have established it as the doctrine of Scripture, that our Lord Jesus Christ died for all men, that all men through him might be saved : But if he died in order to their salvation through faith, he died in order to their election through faith ; and God must have purposed this from eternity.

\* Judgment of the Synod of Dort.



Further: We have his own message to all to whom his servants preach the Gospel. They are commanded to preach "to every creature,"—"He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." This is an unquestionable decree of God in time; and, if God be unchangeable, it was his decree, as touching this matter, from all eternity. But this decree or purpose can in no way be reconciled to the doctrine of an eternal purpose to elect only "a set and determinate number." For the Gospel could not be good news to every creature to whom it should be as such proclaimed; which is the first contradiction to the text. Nor would those who believe it not, but who are, nevertheless, commanded to believe it, have any power to believe it; which is the second contradiction: For since they are to be damned for not believing, they must have had the power to believe, or they could not have come into condemnation for an act impossible to them to perform; or else we must admit it as a principle of the divine government, that God commands his creatures to do what under no circumstances they can do, and then punishes them for not doing what he thus commands. Finally: He commands those that believe not, and who are alleged not to be included in this "fixed number" of elected persons, to believe the good tidings, as a matter in which they are interested; they are commanded to believe the Gospel as a truth: But if they are not interested in it, they are commanded to believe a falsehood; which is the third contradiction: And thus the text and the doctrine cannot consist together.

As the whole argument on this point is involved in what we have already established concerning the universal extent of the benefits of Christ's death, we may leave it to be determined by what has been advanced on that topic; observing only, that two of the points there confirmed bear directly upon the doctrine that election is confined to a "fixed number of men." If we have proved from Scripture, that the reason of the condemnation of men lies in themselves, and not in the want of a sufficient and effectual provision having been made in Christ for their salvation, then the number of the actually elect might be increased; and if it has been established that those for

whom Christ died might “perish;” and that true believers may “turn back unto perdition,” and be “cast away,” and fall into a state in which it were better for them “never to have known the way of righteousness,” then the number of the elect may be diminished. To what has already been said on these subjects the reader is referred; and we shall now only mention a few of the difficulties with which the doctrine of an election from eternity of a determinate number of men to be made heirs of eternal life is attended.

Whether men will look to the dark and repugnant side of this doctrine of the eternal election of a certain number of men unto salvation, or not, it unavoidably follows from it, that all but the persons so chosen in Christ are placed utterly and absolutely, from their very birth, out of the reach of salvation; and have no share at all in the saving mercies of God, who from eternity purposed to reject them, and that not for their fault as sinners. For all, except Adam and Eve, have come into the world with a nature which, left to itself, could not but sin; and as the determination of God, never to give the reprobate the means of avoiding sin, could not rest upon their fault, (for what is absolutely inevitable cannot be charged on man as his fault,) so it must rest where all the high Calvinistic Divines place it,—upon the mere will and sovereign pleasure of God.

The difficulties of reconciling such a scheme as this to the nature of God, not as it is fancied by man, but as it is revealed in his own word; and to many other declarations of Scripture, as to the principles of the administration both of his law and of his grace; one would suppose insuperable by any mind, and indeed are so revolting that few of those who cling to the doctrine of election will be found bold enough to keep them steadily in sight. They even think it uncandid for us who oppose these views to pursue them to their legitimate logical consequences. But in discussion this is inevitable; and if it be done in fairness, and in the spirit of candour, without pushing hard arguments into hard words, the cause of truth and a right understanding of the word of God will thereby be promoted.

The doctrine of the election to eternal life only of a certain determinate number of men, involving, as it necessarily does, the doctrine of the absolute and unconditional reprobation of all the rest of mankind, cannot, we may confidently affirm, be reconciled,—

1. To the love of God. “God is love.” “He is loving to every man, and his tender mercies are over all his works.”

2. Nor to the wisdom of God ; for the bringing into being a vast number of intelligent creatures under a necessity of sinning, and of being eternally lost, teaches no moral lesson to the world ; and contradicts all those notions of wisdom in the ends and processes of government which we are taught to look for, not only from natural reason, but from the Scriptures.

3. Nor to the grace of God, which is so often magnified in the Scriptures ; “for doth it argue any sovereign or high strain, any superabounding richness, of grace or mercy in any man, when ten thousand have equally offended him, only to pardon one or two of them ?” \* And on such a scheme can there be any interpretation given of the passage, “that where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound ?” or in what sense has the grace of God appeared unto all men ? or even to one millionth part of them ?

4. Nor can this merciless reprobation be reconciled to any of those numerous passages in which Almighty God is represented as tenderly compassionate, and pitiful to the worst and most unworthy of his creatures, even them who finally perish. “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” “Being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.” “How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !” “The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.” “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering ? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”

\* Goodwin's Agreement and Difference.



5. It is as manifestly contrary to his justice. Here, indeed, we would not assume to measure this attribute of God by unauthorized human conceptions; but when God himself has appealed to those established notions of justice and equity which have been received among all enlightened persons in all ages, as the measure and rule of his own, we cannot be charged with this presumption. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "Are not my ways equal? saith the Lord." We may then be bold to affirm, that justice and equity in God are what they are taken to be among reasonable men. And if all men every where would condemn it, as most contrary to justice and right, that a Sovereign should condemn to death one or more of his subjects, for not obeying laws which it is absolutely impossible for them, under any circumstances which they can possibly avail themselves of, to obey, and much more the greater part of his subjects; and to require them, on pain of aggravated punishment, to do something in order to the pardon and remission of their offences, which he knows they cannot do,—say, to stop the tide, or to remove a mountain; it implies a charge as awfully and obviously unjust against God, who is so "holy and just in all his doings," so exactly "just in the judgments which he executeth," as to silence all his creatures, to suppose him to act precisely in the same manner in regard to those whom he has passed by and rejected, without any avoidable fault of their own; to destroy them by the simple rule of his own sovereignty, or, in other words, to show that he has power to do it. In whatever light the subject be viewed, no fault, in any right construction, can be chargeable upon the persons so punished, or, as we may rather say, destroyed, since punishment supposes a judicial proceeding, which this act shuts out. For either the reprobates are destroyed for a pure reason of sovereignty without any reference to their sinfulness, and thus all criminality is left out of the consideration; or they are destroyed for the sin of Adam, to which they were not consenting; or for personal faults resulting from a corruption of nature which they brought into the world with them, and which God wills not to correct, and they have no power to correct themselves. Every received notion of jus-

tice is thus violated. We grant, indeed, that some proceedings of the Almighty may appear at first irreconcilable with justice, which are not so ; as, that we should suffer pain and death, and be infected with a morally corrupt nature, in consequence of the transgression of our first progenitors ; that children should suffer for their parents' faults in the ordinary course of providence ; and that, in general calamities, the comparatively innocent should suffer the same evils as the guilty. But none of these are parallel cases. For the " free gift " has come upon all men, " in order to justification of life," through " the righteousness " of the second Adam ; so that the terms of our probation are but changed. None are doomed to inevitable ruin, or the above words of the Apostle would have no meaning ; and pain and death, as to all who avail themselves of the remedy, are made the instruments of a higher life, and of a superabounding of grace through Christ. The same observation may be made as to children who suffer evils for their parents' faults. This circumstance alters the terms of their probation ; but if every condition of probation leaves to men the possibility and the hope of eternal life, and the circumstances of all are balanced and weighed by Him who administers the affairs of individuals on principles, the end of which is to turn all the evils of life into spiritual and higher blessings, there is, obviously, no impeachment of justice in the circumstances of the probation assigned to any person whatever. As to the innocent suffering equally with the guilty in general calamities, the persons so suffering are but comparatively innocent, and their personal transgressions against God deserve a higher punishment than any which this life witnesses ; this may also, as to them, be overruled for merciful purposes, and a future life presents its manifold compensations. But as to the non-elect, the whole case, in this scheme of sovereign reprobation, or sovereign preterition, is supposed to be before us. Their state is fixed ; their afflictions in this life will not in any instance be overruled for ends of edification and salvation ; they are left under a necessity of sinning in every condition ; and a future life presents no compensation, but a fearful looking for of fiery and quenchless indignation. It is

surely not possible for the ingenuity of man to reconcile this to any notion of just government which has ever obtained ; and by the established notions of justice and equity in human affairs, we are taught by the Scriptures themselves to judge of the divine proceedings in all completely-stated and comprehensible cases.

6. Equally impossible is it to reconcile this notion to the sincerity of God in offering salvation by Christ to all who hear the Gospel, of whom this scheme supposes the majority, or at least great numbers, to be among the reprobate. The Gospel, as we have seen, is commanded to be preached to "every creature ;" which publication of "good news to every creature," is an offer of salvation to every creature, accompanied with earnest invitations to embrace it, and admonitory comminations lest any should neglect and despise it. But does it not involve a serious reflection upon the truth and sincerity of God which men ought to shudder at, to assume, at the very time the Gospel is thus preached, that no part of this good news was ever designed to benefit the majority, or any great part, of those to whom it is addressed ? that they to whom this love of God in Christ is proclaimed were never loved by God ? that he has decreed that many to whom he offers salvation, and whom he invites to receive it, shall never be saved ? and that he will consider their sins aggravated by rejecting that which they never could receive, and which he never designed them to receive ? It is no answer to this to say, that we also admit that the offers of mercy are made by God to many who he, by virtue of his prescience, knows will never receive them. We grant this ; but, not now to enter into the question of foreknowledge, it is enough to reply, that in this case there is no insincerity. On the Calvinian scheme the offer of salvation is made to those for whose sins Christ made no atonement ; on ours, he made atonement for the sins of all. On the former, the offer is made to those whom God never designed to embrace it ; on ours, to none but those whom God seriously and in truth wills that they should avail themselves of it : On their theory, the bar to the salvation of the non-elect lies in the want of a provided sacrifice for sin ; on ours, it rests solely in men



themselves: One consists, therefore, with a perfect sincerity of offer; the other cannot be maintained without bringing the sincerity of God into question, and fixing a stigma upon his moral truth.

7. Unconditional reprobation cannot be reconciled with that frequent declaration of Scripture, that "God is no respecter of persons." This phrase, we grant, is not to be interpreted as though the bounties of the Almighty were dispensed in equal measures to his creatures. In the administration of favour, there is place for the exercise of that prerogative which, in a just sense, is called "the sovereignty of God;" but justice knows but of one rule; it is, in its nature, settled and fixed, and respects not the person, but the case. "To have respect of persons" is a phrase, therefore, in Scripture, which sometimes refers to judicial proceedings, and signifies to judge from partiality and affection, and not upon the merits of the question. It is also used by St. Peter with reference to the acceptance of Cornelius: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Here it is clear, that to respect persons would be to reject or accept them without regard to their moral qualities, and on some national or other prejudice or partiality which forms no moral rule of any kind. But if the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation be true; if we are to understand that men like Jacob and Esau, in the Calvinistic construction of the passage, whilst in the womb of their mother, nay, from eternity, are loved and hated, elected or reprobated, before they have done good or evil, then it necessarily follows, that there is precisely this kind of respect of persons with God; for his acceptance or rejection of men stands on some ground of aversion or dislike, which cannot be resolved into any moral rule, and has no respect to the merits of the case itself; and if the Scripture affirms that there is no such respect of persons with God, then the doctrine which implies it is contradicted by inspired authority.

8. The doctrine of which we are showing the difficulties brings with it the repulsive and shocking opinion of the eternal

punishment of infants. Some Calvinists have, indeed, to get rid of the difficulty, or rather to put it out of sight, consigned them to annihilation ; but of the annihilation of any human being there is no intimation in the word of God. In order, therefore, to avoid the fearful consequence of admitting the punishment of beings innocent as to all actual sin, there is no other way than to suppose all children, dying in infancy, to be an elected portion of mankind ; which, however, would be a mere hypothesis brought in to serve a theory without any evidence. That some of those who, as they suppose, are under this sentence of reprobation, die in their infancy, is, probably, what most Calvinists allow ; and, if their doctrine be received, cannot be denied ; and it follows, therefore, that all such infants are eternally lost. Now, we know that infants are not lost, because our Lord gave it as a reason why little children ought not to be hindered from coming unto him, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” On which Calvin himself remarks, “In this word, ‘for of such is the kingdom of heaven,’ Christ comprehends as well little children themselves, as those who in disposition resemble them. *Hac voce, tam parvulos, quam eorum similes, comprehendit.*” \* We are assured of the salvation of infants, also, because “the free gift has come upon all men to,” in order to, “justification of life,” and because children are not capable of rejecting that blessing, and must, therefore, derive benefit from it. The point, also, on which we have just now touched, that “there is no respect of persons with God,” demonstrates it. For, as it will be acknowledged, that some children, dying in infancy, are saved, it must follow, from this principle and axiom in the divine government, that all infants are saved : For the case of all infants, as to innocence or guilt, sin or righteousness, being the same, and God, as a Judge, being “no respecter of persons,” but regarding only the merits of the case, he cannot make this awful distinction as to them, that one part shall be eternally saved and the other eternally lost. That doctrine, therefore, which implies the perdition of infants cannot be congruous

\* *Harm. in Matt. xix. 13.*

to the Scriptures of truth, but is utterly abhorrent to them.\*

9. Finally : Not to multiply these instances of the difficulties which accompany the doctrine of absolute reprobation, or of preterition, (to use the milder term, though the argument is not in the least changed by it,) it destroys the end of punitive justice. That end can only be to deter men from offence, and to add strength to the law of God. But if the whole body of the reprobate are left to the influence of their fallen nature without remedy, they cannot be deterred from sin by threats of inevitable punishment; nor can they ever submit to the dominion of the law of God : Their doom is fixed, and threats and examples can avail nothing.

We may leave every candid mind to the discussion of these and many other difficulties, suggested by the doctrine of the Synod of Dort, as to the election of “a set and determinate number of men” to eternal life; and proceed to consider the second branch of this opinion,—that election is unconditional. “It was made,” says the Synod, “not upon foresight of faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition, (as a cause or condition before required in men to be chosen,) but unto faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness,” &c.

Election, we have already said, must be either God’s purpose in eternity to elect actually, or it must be actual election itself in time; for as election is choosing men “out of the world,” into the true church of Christ, actual election from eternity is not possible, because the subjects of election had no existence; there was no world to choose them out of, and no church into which to bring them. To affirm that any part of mankind were chosen from eternity, in purpose, (for in no other way could they be chosen,) to become members of the church without “foresight of faith, and the obedience of faith,” is, therefore, to say, that God purposed from all eternity to establish a distinction between the world, out of which the elect are actually chosen, and the church, which has no foundation in,

\* On the case of infants, see Part Second, chapter xviii.



or respect to, faith and obedience ; in other words, to constitute his church of persons to whose faith and obedience he had no respect. For how is this conclusion to be avoided ? The subjects of this election, it seems, are chosen as men, as Peter, James, and John, not as believers. God eternally purposed to make Peter, James, and John, members of his church, without respect to their faith or obedience ; his church is, therefore, constituted on the sole principle of this purpose, not upon the basis of faith and obedience ; and the persons chosen into it in time are chosen because they are of the number included in this eternal purpose, and with no regard to their being believers and obedient, or the contrary. How manifestly this opposes the word of God we need scarcely stay to point out. It contradicts that specific distinction constantly made in Scripture between the true church and the world, the only marks of distinction being, as to the former, faith and obedience ; and as to the latter, unbelief and disobedience ; in other words, the church is composed not merely of men, as Peter, James, and John ; but of Peter, James, and John believing and obeying ; whilst all who believe not, and obey not, are the world. The Scriptures make the essential elements of the church to be believing and obeying men ; the Synod of Dort makes them to be men in the simple condition of being included in "a set and determinate number," chosen with no respect to faith and obedience. Thus we have laid two very different foundations upon which to place the superstructure of the church of Christ ; one of them, indeed, is to be found in the Scriptures, but the other only in the theories of men ; and as they agree not together, one of them must be renounced.

But election, without respect to faith, is contrary also to the history of the commencement and first constitution of the church of Christ. Peter, James, and John did not become disciples of Christ in unbelief and disobedience. The very act of their becoming disciples of Christ, unequivocally implied some degree both of faith and obedience. They were chosen, not as men, but as believing men. This is indicated, also, by the grand rite of baptism, instituted by Christ when he com-

missioned his disciples to preach the Gospel, and call men into his church. That baptism was the gate into this church cannot be denied ; but faith was required in order to baptism ; and, where true faith existed, this open confession of Christ would necessarily follow, without delay. Here, then, we see on what grounds men were actually elected into the church of Christ ; it was with respect to their faith that they were thus chosen out of the world, and thus chosen into the church. The rule, too, is universal ; and if so, if it universally holds good that actual election has respect to faith, then, unless God's eternal purpose to elect be at variance with his electing, that is, unless he purposes one thing and does another differing from his purpose,—purposes to elect without respect to faith, and only actually elects with respect to faith,—his eternal purpose to elect had respect both to faith and obedience.

It is true, that the Synod of Dort says, that election is “unto faith, and the obedience of faith,” &c., thereby making the end of election to be faith : In other words, their doctrine is, that some men were personally chosen to believe and obey, even before they existed. But we have no such doctrine in Scripture as the election of individuals unto faith ; and it is inconsistent with several passages which expressly speak of personal election. “Many are called, and few chosen.” In this passage we must understand, that the many who are called, are called to believe and obey the Gospel, or the calling means nothing ; in other words, they are not called. But if the end of this calling be faith and obedience, and the end of election also be faith and obedience, then have we in the text a senseless tautology ; for if the many are called to believe and obey, then, of course, we need not have been told that the few are chosen to believe and obey, since the few are included in the many. But if the choosing of the few means, as it must, something different from the calling of the many, then is the end of election different from the end of calling ; and if the election be, as is plain from the passage, consequent upon the calling, then it can mean nothing else but the choosing of those few of the many, who, being obedient to the calling, had previously believed and obeyed, into the true church and

family of God, which is the proper and direct object of personal election. This passage, therefore, which unquestionably speaks of personal election, contradicts the notion of an election unto faith and obedience, and makes our election consequent upon our obedience to the calling, or evangelical invitation.

Let this notion of personal election unto faith be tested also by another passage, in which, like the former, personal election is spoken of: "I have chosen you out of the world." (John xv. 19.) According to the notion of the Synod of Dort, the act of election consists in appointing or ordaining a certain number of the human race to believe and obey; here the personal electing act is a choosing out of the world, a choosing, manifestly, into the number of Christ's disciples, which no man is capable of without a previous faith; for the very act of becoming Christ's disciple was a confession of faith in him.

A third passage, in which election is spoken of as personal, or at least with more direct reference to individual experience, than to Christians in their collective capacity as the church of Christ, is 1 Peter i. 2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." Here obedience is not the end of election, but of the sanctification of the Spirit; and both are joined with the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, (which, in all cases, is apprehended by faith,) as the media through which our election is effected: "Elect through sanctification of the Spirit," &c. These cannot, therefore, be the ends of our personal election; for if we are elected through that sanctification of the Spirit which produces obedience, we are not elected, being unsanctified and disobedient, in order to be sanctified by the Spirit that we may obey: It is the work of the Spirit which produces obedient faith, and through both we are elected into the church of God.

Very similar to the passage just explained is 2 Thessalonians ii. 13, 14: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to



the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." As the Apostle had been predicting the future apostasy of persons professing Christianity, he recollects, with gratitude, that, from the beginning, from the very first reception of the Gospel in Thessalonica, which was preached there by St. Paul himself with great success, the Thessalonians had manifested no symptoms of this apostasy, but had been honourably steadfast in the faith. For this he gives thanks to God in the verses above quoted, and in the 15th exhorts them still "to stand fast." When, therefore, Calvinistic commentators interpret the clause, "hath chosen you from the beginning," to mean election from eternity, they make a gratuitous assumption which has nothing in the scope of the passage to warrant it. Mr. Scott, indeed,\* rather depends upon the calling of the Thessalonians being, as he states, subsequent to their election, than upon an arbitrary interpretation of the clause, "from the beginning;" and says, "If the calling of the Thessalonians was the effect of any preceding choice of them, it comes to the same thing whether the choice was made the preceding day, or from the foundation of the world." But the calling of the members of this church is not represented by the Apostle as the effect of their having been chosen, but, on the contrary, their election is spoken of as the effect of "the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;" and these, as the effects of the calling of the Thessalonians by the Gospel, "whereunto," to which sanctification and faith, "he called you by our Gospel." Or the whole may be considered as the antecedent to the next clause,—"to which" election from the beginning, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, "he called you by our Gospel." Certain it is, that sanctification and belief of the truth cannot be the ends of election, if they are the means of it, as they are here said to be; and we may, therefore, conclude from this, as well as from the other passages we have quoted as speaking of the personal election of believers, that this kind of election is not "unto faith and obedience," as stated in "the Judgment of the Synod of Dort," that is, a choice of indivi-

\* Notes *in loc.*

**duals** to be made believers and obedient persons ; but an election, as it is expressed both by St. Peter and St. Paul, through faith and obedience ; or, in other words, a choice, into the family of God, of persons already believing and obedient.

There are scarcely any other passages in the New Testament which speak expressly of personal election ; but there is another class of texts in which the term “election” occurs, which refer to believers, not distributively, but collectively ; not personally, but as a body, either existing as particular churches, or as the universal church : And, by entirely overlooking, or ingeniously confounding, this obvious distinction, the advocates of unconditional personal election bring forward such passages with confidence, as proofs of the doctrine of election unto faith furnished by the word of God. Thus the Synod of Dort quotes, as the leading proof of its doctrine of personal election, Ephes. i. 4—6 : “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” This, indeed, is the only passage quoted by the Synod of Dort, in which the terms “chosen” and “election” occur ; and we may ask, why none of those on which we have above offered some remarks, were quoted also, since the subject of personal election is much more obviously contained in them than in that which they have adduced ? The only answer is, that the others were perceived not to accord with the doctrine of election unto faith and obedience ; whilst this, in which the personal election of individual believers is not referred to, but the collective election of the whole body of Christians, was better suited to give a colour to their doctrine, because it speaks, of course, and as the subject required, of election as the means of faith, and of faith as the end of election,—an order which is reversed when the election of individuals, or the election of any body of believers considered distributively and personally, is the subject of the Apostle’s discourse. If, indeed, the election spoken of in this passage were personal election, the

Calvinistic doctrine would not follow from it ; because it would admit of being questioned, whether the choosing in Christ before the foundation of the world, here mentioned, was a choice of certain persons, as men merely, or as believing men, the latter of which is surely the most rational. For all choice necessarily supposes some reason ; but, as men, all things were equal between those who, according to this scheme, were chosen, and those who were passed by. But, according to the Calvinists, this election was made arbitrarily, that is, without any reason but that God would have it so ; and to this sense they bend the clause in the passage under consideration, “according to the good pleasure of his will.” This phrase has, however, no such arbitrary sense. “The good pleasure of his will” means the benevolent and full acquiescence of the will of God with a wise and gracious act ; and, accordingly, in verse 11, the phrase is varied, “according to the counsel of his own will ;” an expression which is at utter variance with the repulsive notion that mere will is in any case the rule of the divine conduct ; or, in other words, that God does any thing merely because he will do it, which excludes all “counsel.” To choose men to salvation, considered as believers, gives a reason for election which not only manifests the wisdom and goodness of God, but has the advantage of being entirely consistent with his own published and express decree : “He that believeth shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This revealed and promulgated decree, we must believe, was according to his eternal purpose ; and if from eternity he determined that believers, and only believers, in Christ, among the fallen race, should be saved, the conclusion is inevitable, that those whom he chose in Christ “before the foundation of the world,” were considered, not as men merely, which gives no reason of choice worthy of any rational being, much less of the ever-blessed God ; but as believing men, which harmonizes the doctrine of election with the other doctrines of Scripture, instead of placing it, as in the Calvinistic scheme, in opposition to them. For the choice not being of certain men, as such, but of all persons believing, and all men to whom the Gospel is preached



being called to believe, every one may place himself in the number of the persons so elected. Thus we get rid of the doctrine of the election of a set and determinate number of men ; and, with that, of the fearful consequence, the absolute reprobation of all the rest, which so few Calvinists themselves have the courage to avow and maintain.

But though this argument might be very successfully urged against those who interpret the passage above quoted of personal election, the context bears unequivocal proofs that it is not of an election or predestination of this kind of which the Apostle speaks, but of the election of believing Jews and Gentiles into the church of God ; in other words, of the eternal purpose of God, upon the publication of the Gospel, to constitute his visible church no longer upon the ground of natural descent from Abraham, but upon the foundation of faith in Christ. For upon no other hypothesis can that distinction which the Apostle makes between the Jews who first believed, and the Gentile Ephesians who afterward believed, be at all explained. He speaks first of the election of Christians in general, whether Jews or Gentiles ; using the pronouns “ us ” and “ we ” as comprehending himself and all others. He then proceeds to the predestination of those “ who first trusted in Christ ; ” plainly meaning himself and other believing Jews. He goes on to say, that the Ephesians were made partakers of the same faith, and therefore were the subjects of the same election and predestination : “ In whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth ; ” the preaching of which truth to them as Gentiles, by the Apostle and his coadjutors, was in consequence of God “ having made known unto them the mystery of his will, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ ; ” which, in the next chapter, a manifest continuance of the same head of discourse, is explained to mean the calling in of the Gentiles with the believing Jews, reconciling “ both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” The same subject he pursues in the third chapter, representing this union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one church as the revelation of the mystery which had been hid “ from the

beginning of the world," but was now "manifested according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Verses 8—11.) Here, then, we have the true meaning of the election and predestination of the Ephesians spoken of in the opening of the Epistle: It was their election, as Gentiles, to be, along with the believing Jews, the church of God, his acknowledged people on earth; which election was according to God's "eternal purpose," to change the constitution of his church; to establish it on the ground of faith in Christ; and thus to extend it into all nations. So far as this respected the Ephesians in general, their election to hear the Gospel sooner than many other Gentiles was unconditional and sovereign, and was an election "unto faith and obedience of faith;" that is to say, these were the ends of that election: But so far as the Ephesians were concerned as individuals, they were actually chosen into the church of Christ as its vital members on their believing; and so the election to the saving benefits of the Gospel was a consequence of their faith, and not the end of it, and was therefore conditional: "In whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

The Calvinistic doctrine of election unto faith has no stronger passage than this to lean upon for support; and this manifestly fails them; whilst other passages, in which the terms "election" or "chosen" occur, all favour a very different view of the Scripture doctrine. When we are commanded to be diligent to make our calling and election sure, or firm, this supposes that it may be rendered nugatory by want of diligence; a doctrine which cannot comport with the absolute certainty of our salvation as founded upon a decree determining, infallibly, our personal election to eternal life, and our faith and obedience in order to it. When believers are called "a chosen generation," they are also called "a royal priesthood, a holy people;" and if the latter characteristics depend upon, and are consequences of, faith, so the former depends upon a previous faith, and is the consequence of it. Finally: Although these terms themselves occur in but few passages, and, in all

of them which respect the personal experience of individuals, express, or necessarily imply, the previous condition of faith, there are many others, which, in different terms, embody the same doctrine. The phrases to be "in Christ," and to be "Christ's," are, doubtless, equivalent to the personal election of believers; and these, and similar modes of expression, are constantly occurring in the New Testament; but no man is ever represented as "Christ's," or as "in Christ," by an eternal election unto faith; but, on the contrary, as entering into that relation which is termed being "in Christ," or being "Christ's," through personal faith alone. The Scripture knows no such distinctions as elect unbelievers and elect believers; but all unbelievers are represented as "of the world;" under "condemnation," so that "the wrath of God abideth upon them;" and as liable to eternal ruin. But if Calvinistic election be true, then there are elect unbelievers; and with respect to these, the doctrine of Scripture is contradicted; for they are not "of the world," though in a state of unbelief, since God from eternity "chose them out of the world;" they are not under condemnation, "but were justified from eternity;" "the wrath of God does not abide upon them," for they are objects of an unchangeable love which has decreed their salvation, subject to no conditions whatever; and therefore no state of unbelief can make them objects of wrath, as no condition of faith can make them objects of a love which was moved by no such consideration. Nor are they liable to ruin. They never were, nor can be, liable to it; the very threats of God are without meaning as to them; and their consciousness of guilt and danger under the awakenings of the Spirit are deceptious and unreal; contradicting the work of the Spirit in the heart of man, as the Spirit of Truth. For if he "convinces them of sin," he convinces them of danger; but they are, in fact, in no danger; and the monstrous conclusion follows inevitably, that the Spirit is employed in exciting fears which have no foundation.

We have thus considered the scriptural doctrine of election; and as we find nothing in it which can warrant any one to limit the meaning of the texts we have adduced to prove that Christ



made an actual atonement for the sins of all mankind, we may proceed to examine another class of Scripture proofs quoted by Calvinists to strengthen their argument,—those which speak of the “calling” and “predestination” of believers.

The terms, “to call,” “called,” and “calling,” very frequently occur in the New Testament, and especially in the Epistles. Sometimes “to call” signifies to invite to the blessings of the Gospel, to offer salvation through Christ, either by God himself, or, under his appointment, by his servants; and in the parable of the marriage of the king’s son, Matt. xxii. 1—14, which appears to have given rise to many instances of the use of this term in the Epistles, we have three descriptions of “called” or invited persons. First, the disobedient, who would not come in at the call, but made light of it. Second, the class of persons represented by the man who, when the King came in to see his guests, had not on the wedding garment; and with respect to whom our Lord makes the general remark, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” The persons thus represented by this individual culprit were not only “called,” but actually came into the company. Third, the approved guests; those who were both called and chosen. As far as the simple calling or invitation is concerned, all these three classes stand upon equal ground: All were invited; and it depended upon their choice and conduct whether they embraced the invitation, and were admitted as guests. We have nothing here to countenance the Calvinistic fiction, which is termed “effectual calling.” This implies an irresistible influence exerted upon all the approved guests, but withheld from the disobedient, who could not, therefore, be otherwise than disobedient; or, at most, could only come in without that wedding garment, which it was never put into their power to take out of the King’s wardrobe; the want of which would necessarily exclude them, if not from the church on earth, yet from the church in heaven. The doctrine of the parable is in entire contradiction to this; for they who refused, and they who complied but partially with the calling, are represented, not merely as being left without the benefit of the feast, but as incurring additional guilt and condemnation for refusing the

invitation. It is to this offer of salvation by the Gospel, this invitation to spiritual and eternal benefits, that St. Peter appears to refer, when he says, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call:" (Acts ii. 39 :) A passage which, we may observe, in passing, declares "the promise" to be as extensive as the "calling;" in other words, as the offer or invitation. To this also, St. Paul refers, Rom. i. 5, 6: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name;" that is, to publish his Gospel, in order to bring all nations to the obedience of faith; "among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ;" you at Rome have heard the Gospel, and have been invited to salvation in consequence of this design. This promulgation of the Gospel, by the ministry of the Apostle, personally, under the name of "calling," is also referred to in Galatians i. 6: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ," (obviously meaning, that it was the Apostle himself who had called them, by his preaching, to the grace of Christ,) "unto another Gospel." So also in chapter v. 13: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." Again: 1 Thess. ii. 12: "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you," invited you, "to his kingdom and glory."

In our Lord's parable it will also be observed, that the persons called are not invited as separate individuals to partake of solitary blessings; but they are called to "a feast," into a company or society, before whom the banquet is spread. The full revelation of the transfer of the visible church of Christ from Jews by birth, to believers of all nations, was not, however, then made. When this branch of the evangelic system was fully revealed to the Apostles, and taught by them to others, that part of the meaning of our Lord's parable which was not at first developed, was more particularly inculcated by his inspired followers. The calling of guests to the evangelical feast, we now more fully learn, was not the mere calling of men to partake of spiritual benefits; but calling them also to form a spiritual society composed of Jews and Gentiles, the

believing men of all nations ; to have a common fellowship in these blessings, and to be formed into this fellowship for the purpose of increasing their number, and diffusing the benefits of salvation among the people or nation to which they respectively belonged. The invitation, "the calling," of the first Preachers was to all who heard them in Rome, in Ephesus, in Corinth, and other places ; and those who embraced it, and joined themselves to the church by faith, baptism, and continued public profession, were named, especially and eminently, "the called," because of their obedience to the invitation. They not only put in their claim to the blessings of Christianity individually, but became members of the new church, that spiritual society of believers which God now visibly owned as his people. As they were thus called into a common fellowship by the Gospel, this is sometimes termed their "vocation ;" as the object of this church-state was to promote holiness, it is termed a "holy vocation ;" as sanctity was required of the members, they are said to have been "called to be saints ;" as the final result was, through the mercy of God, to be eternal life, we hear of "the hope of their calling," and of their being "called to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus."

These views will abundantly explain the various passages in which the term "calling" occurs in the Epistles : "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ;" (Rom. ix. 24 ;) that is, whom he hath made members of his church through faith. "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God ;" the wisdom and efficacy of the Gospel being, of course, acknowledged in their very profession of Christ, in opposition to those to whom the preaching of "Christ crucified" was "a stumbling-block," and "foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 24.) "Is any man called," (brought to acknowledge Christ, and to become a member of his church,) "being circumcised ? let him not become uncircumcised : Is any called in uncircumcision ? let him not be circumcised." (1 Cor. vii. 18.) "That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. There is one body, and one Spirit,



even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." (Eph. iv. 1, 4.) "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. ii. 12.) "Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.) "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. i. 9, 10.) On which passage we may remark, that the object of the "calling" and the "purpose" mentioned in it, must of necessity be interpreted to mean the establishment of the church on the principle of faith; and not, as formerly, on natural descent. For personal election, and a purpose of effectual personal calling, could not have been hidden till manifested by the appearing of Christ; since every instance of true conversion to God in any age prior to the appearing of Christ, would be as much a manifestation of eternal election, and an instance of personal effectual calling, according to the Calvinistic scheme, as it was after the appearance of Christ. The Apostle is speaking of a purpose of God, which was kept secret till revealed by the Christian system; and, from various other parallel passages, we learn that this secret, this "mystery," as he often calls it, was the union of the Jews and Gentiles in "one body," or church, by faith.

In none of these passages is the doctrine of the exclusive calling of any set number of men contained; and the Synod of Dort, as though they felt this, only attempt to infer the doctrine from a text not yet quoted; but which we will now examine. It is Romans viii. 30: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This is the text on which the Calvinists chiefly rest their doctrine of effectual calling; and tracing it, as they say, through its steps and links, they conclude, that "a set and determinate number" of persons having been predestinated unto salvation, this set number only are called effectually, then justified, and

finally glorified. The words of the Synod of Dort are, “He hath chosen a set number of certain men, neither better nor more worthy than others, but lying in the common misery with others, to salvation in Christ, whom he had also appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation from all eternity; and so he decreed to give them to him to be saved; and effectually to call and draw them to a communion with him, by his word and Spirit; or to give them a true faith in him; to justify, sanctify, and finally glorify them; having been kept in the communion of his Son, to the demonstration of his mercy, and the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.”\*

The text under consideration is added by the Synod, in proof of the doctrine of this article; but it was evidently nothing to the purpose, unless it had spoken of “a set and determinate number” of men as predestinated and called, independent of any consideration of their faith and obedience; which number, as being determinate, would, by consequence, exclude the rest. As these are points on which the text is at least silent, there is nothing in it unfriendly to those arguments founded on explicit texts of holy writ which have been already urged against this view of election; and with this notion of election is refuted, also, the cognate doctrine of effectual calling, considered as a work of God in the heart, of which the elect only can be the subjects. But the passage, having been pressed into so alien a service, deserves consideration; and it will be found that it indeed speaks of the privileges and hopes of true believers, but not of those privileges and hopes as secured to them by any such decree of election as the Synod has advocated. To prove this, we remark, 1. That the chapter in which the text is found, is the lofty and animating conclusion of St. Paul’s argument on justification by faith; it is a discourse of that present state of pardon and sanctity, and of that future hope of felicity into which justification introduces believers, notwithstanding those sufferings and persecutions of the present life to which those to whom he wrote were exposed,

\* *Sententia de Divinâ Prædest. Art. 7. Est autem Electio immutabile Dei propositum, &c.*

and under which they had need of encouragement. It was, obviously, not in his design here to speak of the doctrines of election and non-election, however these doctrines may be understood. There is nothing in the course of his argument which leads to them; and, therefore, those who make use of the text in question for this purpose, are obliged to press it by circuitous inference into their service.

2. As the passage stands in intimate connexion with an important and elucidatory context, it ought not to be considered as insulated and complete in itself; which has been the great source of erroneous interpretations. Under the sufferings of the present time, the Apostle encourages those who had believed, with the hope of a glorious resurrection; which forms the subject of his consolatory remarks from verse 17 to 25. The assistance and intercession of the Spirit, and the working of all things “together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,” clearly meaning those who, according to the divine design, had received and embraced the Gospel in truth, form two additional topics of consolatory suggestion. The passage under consideration immediately follows, and is in full: (For the Synod has quoted it short :) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called” (who are called) “according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” The connexion is here manifest: The sufferings of the present time could only work together for the good of them that love God, by being connected with, and compensated in a future state by, a glorious resurrection from the dead; and, therefore, the Apostle shows that this was the design of God, the ultimate and triumphant result of the administration of his grace, that they who love God here should be conformed to the image of his Son, in his glorified state, that he might be “the First-born among many brethren;” the Head and Chief of the



redeemed, who shall be acknowledged as his brethren, and co-heirs of his glory. Thus the whole of the 29th verse is a reason given to show why "all things," however painful in the present life, "work together for good to them that love God;" and it is, therefore, introduced by the connective particle *οτι*, which has here, obviously, a causal signification: "For" (because) "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate."

3. The Apostle is here speaking, we grant, not of the foreknowledge or predestination of bodies of men to church-privileges; but of the experience of believers, taken distributively and personally. This will, however, be found to strengthen our argument against the use made of the latter part of the passage by the Synod of Dort.

It is affirmed of believers, that they were "foreknown." This term may be taken in the sense of fore-approved. For not only is it common with the sacred writers to express approval by the phrase "to know;" of which Hebraism the instances are many in the New Testament; but in Romans xi. 2, "to foreknow," is best interpreted into this meaning: "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." It is not of the whole people of Israel of which the Apostle here speaks, as the context shows, but of the believing part of them, called, subsequently, "the remnant according to the election of grace;" a clause which has been before explained. The question put by the Apostle into the mouth of an objecting Jew is, "Hath God cast away his people?" This is denied; but the illustration taken from the reservation of seven thousand men, in the time of Elijah, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, proves that St. Paul meant to say, that God had cast off, from being members of his church, all but "the remnant," all but his people whom he "foreknew;" those who had laid aside the inveterate prejudices of their nation, and had entered into the new Christian church by faith. These he foreknew, that is approved, and so received them into his church. In this sense of the term "foreknew," the text in question harmonizes well with the context: "All things work together for good to them that love God," &c. "For, whom

he did foreknow," (approve as lovers of him,) "he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son," in mind and temper here, and especially in glory hereafter.

The second sense of foreknowing is that of simple prescience; and if any prefer this, we shall not dispute with him, since it will come to the same issue. The foreknowledge of men must have respect either simply to their existence as persons, or as existing under some particular circumstances and characters. If persons only be the objects of this foreknowledge, then has God's prescience no more to do with the salvation of the elect, than of the non-elect, since all are equally foreknown as persons in a state of existence; and we might as well argue the glorification of the reprobate from God's foreknowing them, in this sense, as that of the elect. The objects of this foreknowledge, then, must be men under certain circumstances and characters; not in their simple existence as rational beings. If, therefore, the term "foreknow," in the passage above cited,—“God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew,”—be taken in the sense of prescience, those of the general mass of the Jews who were not “cast away,” were foreknown under some circumstance and character which distinguished them from the others; and what this was, is made sufficiently plain from the context,—the persons foreknown were the then believing part of the Jews: “Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” Equally clear are the circumstances and character under which, more generally, the Apostle represents believers, as having been foreknown, in the text more immediately under examination. Those “whom he did foreknow,” are manifestly the believers of whom he speaks in the discourse, and who are called, in chapter viii. 28, “them that love God.” Under some character he must have foreknown them, or his foreknowledge of them would not be special and distinctive; it would afford no ground from which to argue any thing respecting them; it could make no difference between them and others. This specific character is given by the Apostle; but it is not that which is gratuitously assumed by the Synod of Dort,—a selection of them from the mass, with-

out respect to their faith. It is their faith itself; for of believers only is St. Paul speaking as the subjects of this foreknowledge; and such believers too as "love God," and who, having actually embraced the heavenly invitation, are emphatically said to be, as before explained, "called according to his purpose."

"To predestinate," or to determine beforehand, is the next term in the text; but here it is also to be remarked, that the persons predestinated, or before determined, to be glorified with Christ, are the same persons, under the same circumstances and character, as those who are said to have been foreknown of God; and what has been said under the former term, applies, therefore, in part to this. The subjects of predestination are the persons foreknown, and the persons foreknown are true believers; foreknown as such, or they could not have been specially or distinctively foreknown, according to the doctrine of the Apostle. This predestination, then, is not of persons "unto faith and obedience," but of believing and obedient persons unto eternal glory. Nor are faith and obedience mentioned in any passage as the end of predestination, except in Ephes. i.; and we have already proved, when treating of election, that the predestination spoken of in that chapter, is the eternal purpose of God to choose the Gentile Ephesians into his church, along with the believing Jews; and that what is there said, is not intended of personal, but of collective, election and predestination to the means and ordinances of salvation. For the argument by which this is established, let the reader, to prevent repetition, turn back.

The passage before us, then, declares, that true believers were foreknown and predestinated to eternal glory; and when the Apostle adds, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified;" he shows in particular how the divine purpose to glorify believers is carried into effect, through all its stages. The great instrument of bringing men to love God is the Gospel; they are therefore "called," invited by it, to this state and benefit; the calling being obeyed, they are "justified;" and being justified, and



continuing in that state of grace, they are “glorified.” This is the plain and obvious course of the amplification pursued by the Apostle; but let us remark how many unscriptural notions the Synod of Dort engrafts upon it. First, a “certain number” of persons, not as believers, but as men, are foreknown; then a decree of predestination to eternal life goes forth in their favour; but still without respect to them as believing men, as the subjects of that decree;—then, we suppose, by another decree, (for the first cannot look at qualities at all,) and by a second predestination, they are to be made believers;—then they are exclusively “called;” then infallibly justified; and being justified, are infallibly glorified. In opposition to these notions, we have already shown that the persons spoken of are foreknown and predestinated as believers, not as men, or persons; and we may also oppose scriptural objections to every other part of the interpretation.

As to “calling,” we allow that all of whom the Apostle speaks are necessarily “called;” for since he is discoursing of the predestination of believers in Christ to eternal glory, and does not touch the question of the salvation, or otherwise, of those who have not the means of becoming such, the calling of the Gospel is necessarily supposed, as it is only upon that divine system being proposed to their faith, that they could become believers in Christ. But though all such as the Apostle speaks of are “called,” they are not the only persons called; on the contrary, our Lord declares that “many are called, but few chosen.” To confine the calling here spoken of to those who are actually saved, it was necessary to invent the fiction of “effectual calling,” which is made peculiar to the elect; but calling is the invitation, and offer, and publication of the Gospel; a bringing men into a state of Christian privilege to be improved unto salvation, and not an operation in them. “Effectual invitation,” “effectual offer,” and “effectual publication,” are turns of the phrase which sufficiently expose the delusiveness of their comment. By “effectual calling,” they mean an inward compelling of the mind to embrace the outward invitation of the Gospel, and to yield to the inward solicitations of the Spirit which accompanies it; but this,

whether true or false, is a totally different thing from all that the New Testament terms "calling." It is true, that some embrace the call, and others reject it, yet is there in the "calling" of the Scripture nothing exclusively appropriate to those who are finally saved; and though the Apostle supposes those whom he speaks of in the text as "called," to have been obedient, he confines not the calling itself to them so as to exclude others,—still "many are called." Nor is the Synod more sound in assuming that all who are called are justified. If "many are called, and few chosen," this assumption is unfounded; nay, all compliances with the call do not issue in justification; for the man who not only heard the call, but came in to the feast, put not on the wedding garment, and was therefore finally cast out. Equally contradictory to the Scripture is it so to explain St. Paul here, as to make him say, that all who are justified are also glorified. The justified are glorified; but not, as we have seen from various texts of Scripture already, all who are justified. For if we have established it, that the persons who "turn back to perdition;" "make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience;" who turn out of the "way of righteousness;" who forget that they were "purged from their old sins;" who have "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," and were "sanctified" with the blood they afterwards "counted an unholy thing;" are represented by the Apostles to have been in a state of grace and acceptance with God, through Christ; then all persons justified are not infallibly glorified, but only such are saved as "endure to the end;" and they only receive that "crown of life," who are "faithful unto death."

The clear reason why the Apostle, having stated that true believers were foreknown and predestinated, introduces also the order and method of their salvation, was, to connect that salvation with the Gospel and the work of Christ, and to secure to him the glory of it. The Gospel reveals it, that those who "love God," shall find that "all things work together for their good," "because," *οτι*, they are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God," in his glory; yet the Gospel

did not find them lovers of God, but made them so. Since, therefore, none but such persons were so foreknown and predestinated to be heirs of glory, the Gospel calling was issued according to "his purpose," or plan, of bringing them that love him to glory, in order to produce this love in them. "Whom he" thus "called," assuming them to be obedient to the call, "he justified; and whom he justified," assuming them to be faithful unto death, "he glorified." But since the persons predestinated were contemplated as believers, not as a certain number of persons, then all to whom the invitation was issued might obey that call, and all might be justified, and all glorified. In other words, all who heard the Gospel might, through it, be brought to love God, and might take their places among those who were "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." For since the predestination, as we have seen, was not of a certain number of persons, but of all believers who love God, then, either it must be allowed, that all who were called by the Gospel might take the character and circumstances which would bring them under the predestination mentioned by the Apostle, or else those who deny this are bound to the conclusion, that God calls (invites) many, whom he never intends to admit to the celestial feast; and not only so, but punishes them, with the severity of a relentless displeasure, for not obeying an invitation which he never designed them to accept, and which they never had the power to accept. In other words, the interpretation of this passage by the Synod of Dort obliges all who follow it to admit all the consequences connected with the doctrine of reprobation, as before stated.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### *An Examination of certain Passages of Scripture, supposed to limit the Extent of Christ's Redemption.*

HAVING now shown, that those passages of holy writ in which the terms "election," "calling," "predestination," and "foreknowledge" occur, do not warrant those inferences by which Calvinists attempt to restrain the signification of those declarations with respect to the extent of the benefit of Christ's death which are expressed in terms so universal in the New Testament, we may conclude our investigation of the sense of Scripture on this point, by adverting to some of those insulated texts which are most frequently adduced to support the same conclusion.

John vi. 37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

It is inferred from this, and some similar passages in the Gospels, that, by a transaction between the Father and the Son, a certain number of persons, called "the elect," were given to Christ, and in process of time drawn to him by the Father; and that as none can be saved but those thus given to him, and drawn by the Father, the doctrine of distinguishing grace is established; and the rest of mankind, not having been given by the Father to the Son, can have no saving participation in the benefits of a redemption which did not extend to them. This fiction has often been defended with much ingenuity; but it remains a fiction still, unsupported by any good interpretation of the texts which have been assumed as its foundation.

1. The first objection to the view usually taken by Calvinists of this text, is, that, in the case of the perverse Jews, with whom the discourse of Christ was held, it places the

reason of their not coming to Christ, in their not having been given to him by the Father; whereas our Lord, on the contrary, places it in themselves, and shows that he considered their case to be in their own hands by his inviting them to come to him, and reproving them because they would not come. “Ye have not his word” (the word of the Father) “abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” (John v. 38.) “And ye will not come to me that ye may have life.” (Verse 40.) “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?” (Verse 44.) “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.” (Verse 46.) Now these statements cannot stand together: For if the true reason why the perverse Jews did not believe in our Lord was, that they had not been given to him of the Father, then it lay not in themselves: But if the reason was, that “his word did not abide in them;” that they “would not come to him;” that they sought worldly honour; finally, that they believed not Moses’s writings; then it is altogether contradictory to these declarations, to place it in an act of God; to which it is not attributed in any part of the discourse.

2. To be given by the Father to Christ, is a phrase abundantly explained in the context, which this class of interpreters generally overlook.

It had a special application to those pious Jews who “waited for redemption at Jerusalem;” those who read and believed the writings of Moses, (a general term, it would seem, for the Old Testament Scriptures,) and who were thus prepared, by more spiritual views than the rest, though they were not unmixed with obscurity, to receive Christ as the Messiah. Of this description were Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathaniel, Lazarus and his sisters, and many others. Philip says to Nathaniel, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write;” and Nathaniel was manifestly a pious Jew; for our Lord said of him, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” The light which such honest inquirers into the meaning of the Scriptures obtained as to the import of their testimony concerning the Messiah, and the character

and claims of Jesus, is expressly attributed to the teaching and revelation of the Father. So, after Peter's confession, our Lord exclaimed, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." This teaching, and its influence upon the mind, are, in John vi. 44, called the "drawing" of the Father: "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him;" for, that "to draw," and "to teach," mean the same thing, is evident, since our Lord immediately adds, "It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God;" and then subjoins this exegetical observation: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh to me." Those who truly believed Moses's words, then, were under the Father's illuminating influence, "heard and learned of the Father;" were drawn of the Father; and so, by the Father, were given to Christ, as his disciples, to be more fully taught the mysteries of his religion, and to be made the partakers of its saving benefits; for, "this is the Father's will which sent me, that of all which he hath given me" (thus to perfect in knowledge, and to exalt into holiness) "I should lose nothing; but should raise it up again at the last day." Thus we have exhibited that beautiful process of the work of God in the hearts of sincere Jews, which took place in their transit from one dispensation to another, from Moses to Christ. Taught of the Father; led into the sincere belief and general spiritual understanding of the Scriptures as to the Messiah; when Christ appeared, they were drawn and given to him, as the now visible and accredited Head, Teacher, Lord, and Saviour of the church. All in this view is natural, explicit, and supported by the context; all in the Calvinistic interpretation appears forced, obscure, and inapplicable to the whole tenor of the discourse. For to what end of edification of any kind were the Jews told, that none but a certain number, elected from eternity, and given to him by the Father before the world was, should come to him; and that they to whom he was then speaking were not of that number? But the coherence of the discourse is manifest, when, in these sermons of our Lord, they were told that their not coming to Christ



was the proof of their unbelief in Moses's writings ; that they were not taught of God ; that they had neither heard nor learned of the Father, whom they yet professed to worship and seek ; and that, as the hinderance to their coming to Christ was in the state of their hearts, it was remediable by a diligent and honest search of the Scriptures, and by listening to the teachings of God. To this very class of Jews our Lord, in this same discourse, says, "Search the Scriptures:" But to what end were they to do this, if, in the Calvinistic sense, they were not given to him of the Father ? The text in question, then, thus opened by a reference to the whole discourse, is of obvious meaning: "All that the Father giveth me by this preparing teaching, shall or will come to me;" (for it is simply the future tense of the indicative mood which is used ; and no notion of irresistible influence is conveyed ;) "and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." The latter clause is added to show the perfect harmony of design between Christ and the Father, a point often adverted to in this discourse: For "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Whom, therefore, the Father so gives, I receive: I enter upon my assigned office, and shall be faithful to it. In reference, also, to the work of God in the hearts of men in general, as well as to the honest and inquiring Jews of our Lord's day, these passages have a clear and interesting application. The work of the Father is carried on by his convincing and teaching Spirit ; but that Spirit testifies of Christ, leads to Christ, and gives to Christ, that we may receive the full benefit of his sacrifice and salvation, and be placed in the church of which he is the Head. But in this there is no exclusion. That which hinders others from coming to Christ is that which hinders them from being drawn of the Father ; from hearing and learning of the Father, in his holy word, and by his Spirit ; which hinderance is the moral state of the heart, not any exclusive decree ; not the want of teaching, or drawing ; but, as it is compendiously expressed in Scripture, a "resisting of the Holy Ghost."

Matthew xx. 15, 16 : "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine eye evil because I am good ?

So the last shall be first, and the first last ; for many are called, but few chosen."

This passage has been often urged in proof of the doctrine of unconditional election ; and the argument raised upon it is, that God has a right to dispense grace and glory to whom he will, on a principle of pure sovereignty ; and to leave others to perish in their sins. That the passage has no relation to this doctrine, needs no other proof than that it is the conclusion of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. The householder gives to them that "wrought but one hour" an equal reward to that bestowed upon those who had laboured through the twelve. The latter received the full price of the day's labour agreed upon ; and the former were made subjects of a special and sovereign dispensation of grace. The exercise of the divine sovereignty, in bestowing degrees of grace, or reward, is the subject of the parable, and no one disputes it ; but, according to the Calvinistic interpretation, no grace at all, no reward, is bestowed upon the non-elect, who are, moreover, punished for rejecting a grace never offered. The absurdity of such a use of the parable is obvious. It relates to no such subject ; for its moral manifestly relates to the reception of great offenders, and especially of the Gentiles, into the favour of Christ, and the abundant rewards of heaven.

2 Timothy ii. 19 : "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his : And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

The Apostle, in this chapter, is speaking of those ancient heretics who affirmed, "that the resurrection is past already, and overthrew the faith of some." What then ? The truth itself is not overthrown ; the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, or inscription, "The Lord knoweth," or approveth, or, if it please better, distinguishes and acknowledges, "them that are his ;" and, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity ;" which is as much as to say, that none are truly the Lord's who do not depart from iniquity ; and that those whose faith is overthrown by the

influence of corrupt principles and manners are no longer accounted his ; all which is perfectly congruous with the opinions of those who hold the unrestricted extent of the death of Christ. Towards the Calvinistic doctrine, this text certainly bears no friendly aspect ; for surely it was of little consequence to any, to have their faith overthrown, if that faith never was, nor could be, connected with salvation.

John x. 26 : “ But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”

The argument here is, that the cause of the unbelief of the persons addressed was, that they were not of the number given to Christ by the Father, from eternity, to the exclusion of all others.\* Let it, however, be observed, that, in direct opposition to this, men are called the “ sheep ” of Christ by our Lord himself, not with reference to any supposed transaction between the Father and the Son in eternity, which is never even hinted at, but because of their qualities and acts. “ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them ; and they follow me.” “ A stranger will they not follow.” Why then did not the Jews believe ? Because they had not the qualities of Christ’s sheep ; they were neither discriminating as to the voice of the Shepherd, nor obedient to it. The usual Calvinistic interpretation brings in our Lord, in this instance, as teaching the Jews that the reason why they did not believe on him was, that they could not believe ; for, as Mr. Scott says in the note below, “ Not being of that chosen remnant, they were left to the pride and enmity of their carnal hearts.” This was not likely to be very edifying to them. But the words of our Lord are manifestly words of reproof, grounded, not upon acts of God, but upon acts of their own ; and they are parallel to the passages, “ If God were your Father, ye would love me.” (Chap. viii. 42.) “ Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” (xviii. 37.) “ How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another ? ” (v. 44.)

\* “ The true reason why they did not believe was, the want of that simple, teachable, and inoffensive temper, which characterized his sheep ; for, not being of that chosen remnant, they were left to the pride and enmity of their carnal hearts.”—SCOTT’S *Commentary*.



John xiii. 18: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

"He perfectly knew," says Mr. Scott on the passage, "what persons he had chosen, as well as which of them were chosen unto salvation." This is surely making our Lord utter a very unmeaning truism; for as he chose the Apostles, so he must have known that he chose them. Dr. Whitby's interpretation is, therefore, to be taken in preference: "I know the temper and disposition of those whom I have chosen, and what I may expect from every one of them; for which cause I said, 'Ye are not all clean;' but God in his wisdom hath permitted this, that as Ahithophel betrayed David, though he was his familiar friend, so Judas, my familiar at my table, might betray the Son of God; and so the words recorded Psalm lxi. 9, might be fulfilled in him also of whom King David was the type."\* Certainly, Judas was "chosen" as well as the rest: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Nor have we any reason to conclude that Christ uses the term "chosen" differently in the two passages. When, therefore, our Lord says, "I know whom I have chosen," the term "know" must be taken in the sense of discriminating character.

John xv. 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Mr. Scott, whom, as being a modern Calvinistic commentator, we rather choose again to quote, interprets, "chosen them unto salvation." In its proper sense, we make no objection to this phrase: It is a scriptural one; but it must be taken in its own connexion. Here, however, either the term "chosen" is to be understood with reference to the apostolic office, which is very agreeable to the context; or, if it relate to the salvation of the disciples, it can have no respect to the doctrine of eternal election. For if the election spoken of were not an act done in time, it would have been unnecessary for our Lord to say, "Ye have not chosen me;" because it is obvious they could

\* Notes *in loc.*

not choose him before they came into being. Another passage, also, in the same discourse, further proves, that the election mentioned was an act done in time : “ I have chosen you out of the world.” (Verse 19.) But if they were “ chosen out of the world,” they were chosen subsequently to their being in the world ; and therefore the election spoken of is not eternal. The last observation will also deprive these interpreters of another favourite passage : “ Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” The “ giving,” here mentioned, was no more an act of God in eternity, as they pretend, than the “ choosing” to which we have already referred ; for in the same discourse the Apostles are called “ the men thou gavest me out of the world,” and were therefore given to Christ in time. The exception as to Judas, also, proves that this giving expresses actual discipleship. Judas had been given as well as the rest, or he could not have been mentioned as an exception ; that is, he had been once found, or he could not have been lost.

2 Timothy i. 9 : “ Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

Mr. Scott here contends for the doctrine of the personal election of the persons spoken of, “ from the beginning, or before eternal ages,” which is the most literal translation ; and argues that this cannot be denied, without supposing “ that all who live and die impenitent may be said to be saved, and called with a holy calling, because a Saviour was promised from the beginning of the world.” “ Indeed,” he adds, “ the purpose of God is mentioned as the reason why they, rather than others, were saved and called.” We shall see the passage in a very different light, if we attend to the following considerations :—

“ The purpose and grace,” or gracious purpose, “ which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” is represented as having been “ hid in past ages ;” for the Apostle immediately adds, “ but is now made manifest by the appearing

of our Saviour Jesus Christ." It cannot be the personal election of believers, therefore, of which the Apostle here speaks; because it was saying nothing, to declare that the divine purpose to elect them was not manifest in former ages, but was reserved to the appearing of Christ. Whatever degree of manifestation God's purpose of personal election as to individuals receives, even the Calvinists acknowledge that it is made obvious only by the personal moral changes which take place in them through their "effectual calling," faith, and regeneration. Till the individual, therefore, comes into being, God's purpose to elect him cannot be manifested; and those who were so elected, but did not live till Christ appeared, could not have their election manifested before he appeared. Again: If personal election be intended in the text, and calling and conversion are the proofs of personal election, then it is not true that the election of individuals to eternal life was kept hid until the appearing of Christ; for every true conversion, in any former age, was as much a manifestation of personal election, that is, of the peculiar favour and distinguishing grace of God, as it is under the Gospel. A parallel passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, (iii. 4—6,) will, however, explain that before us: "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel:" And in verse 11, this is called, in exact conformity to the phrase used in the Epistle to Timothy, "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The "purpose," or "gracious purpose," mentioned in both places, as formerly hidden, but "now manifested," was therefore the purpose to form one universal church of believing Jews and Gentiles; and in the text before us, the Apostle, speaking in the name of all his fellow-Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, says that they were saved and called according to that previous purpose and plan,—“who hath saved us, and called us,” &c. The reason why the Apostle Paul so often refers to



this "eternal purpose" of God, is to justify and confirm his own ministry as a teacher of the Gentiles, and an assertor of their equal spiritual rights with the Jews; and that this subject was present to his mind when he wrote this passage, and not an eternal personal election, is manifest from verse 11, which is a part of the same paragraph: "Whereunto I am appointed a Preacher, and an Apostle, and a Teacher of the Gentiles."

But, says Mr. Scott, "all who live and die impenitent may then be said to be 'saved, and called with a holy calling,' because a Saviour was promised from the beginning of the world." But we do not say that any are saved only because a Saviour was promised from the beginning of the world; but that the Apostle simply affirms that the salvation of believers, whether Gentiles or Jews, and the means of that salvation, were the consequences of God's previous purpose, before the world began. All who are actually saved may say, "We are saved according to this purpose;" but if their actual salvation shut out the salvation of all others, then no more have ever been saved than those included by the Apostle in the pronoun "us," which would prove too much. But Mr. Scott tells us that "the purpose of God is mentioned as the reason why they, rather than others, were thus saved and called." It is mentioned with no such view. The purpose of God is introduced by the Apostle as his authority for making to the Gentiles the offer of salvation; and as a motive to induce Timothy to prosecute the same glorious work after his decease. This is obviously the scope of the whole chapter.

Acts xiii. 48: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed:" Mr. Scott is somewhat less confident than some others, as to the support which the Calvinistic system is thought to derive from the word rendered "ordained." He, however, attempts to leave the impression upon the minds of his readers, that it means "appointed to eternal life."

We may, however, observe,—

1. That the persons here spoken of were the Gentiles to whom the Apostles preached the Gospel, upon the Jews of the same place "putting it from them," and "judging" or proving

“themselves unworthy of eternal life.” But if the only reason why the Gentiles believed was, that they were “ordained,” in the sense of personal predestination, to “eternal life;” then the reason why the Jews believed not was the want of such a predestinating act of God, and not, as it is affirmed, an act of their own,—the putting it away from them.

2. This interpretation supposes that all the elect Gentiles at Antioch believed at that time; and that no more, at least of full age, remained to believe. This is rather difficult to admit; and, therefore, Mr. Scott says, “Though it is probable that all who were thus affected at first, did not at that time believe unto salvation, yet many did.” But this is not according to the text, which says expressly, “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed;” so that such commentators must take this inconvenient circumstance along with their interpretation, that all the elect in the city of Antioch were, at that moment, brought into Christ’s church.

3. Even some Calvinists, not thinking that it is the practice of the Apostles and Evangelists to lift up the veil of the decrees so high as this interpretation supposes, choose to render the words,—“As many as were determined” or “ordered for eternal life.”

4. But we may finally observe, that in no place in the New Testament, in which the same word occurs, is it ever employed to convey the meaning of destiny, or predestination; a consideration which is fatal to the argument which has been drawn from it. The following are the only instances of its occurrence: “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.” (Matt. xxviii. 16.) Here the word means “signified” or “agreed upon” beforehand, and certainly conveys no idea of destiny. “For I also am a man set under authority.” (Luke vii. 8.) Here the word means “placed” or “disposed.” “They determined that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem.” (Acts xv. 2.) Here it signifies mutual agreement and decision. “Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.” (Acts xxii. 10.) Here it means committed to, or appointed,

in the way of injunction ; but no idea of destiny is conveyed. "And when they had appointed him a day ;" (Acts xxviii. 23 ;) when they had fixed upon a day by mutual agreement ; for St. Paul was not under the command or control of the visitors who came to him to hear his doctrine. "The powers that be are ordained of God ;" (Rom. xiii. 1 ;) clearly signifying constituted and ordered. "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." (1 Cor. xvi. 15.) Here it can mean nothing else but applied, devoted themselves to. Thus the word never takes the sense of predestination ; but, on the contrary, when St. Luke wishes to convey that notion, he combines it with a preposition, and uses a compound verb : "And hath determined the times before appointed." This was pre-ordination, and he therefore so terms it ; but in the text in question he speaks not of pre-ordination, but of ordination simply. The word employed signifies, "to place," "order," "appoint," "dispose," "determine," and is very variously applied. The prevalent idea is that of "settling," "ordering," and "resolving ;" and the meaning of the text is, that as many as were fixed and resolved upon eternal life,—as many as were careful about, and determined on, salvation,—believed. For that the historian is speaking of the candid and serious part of the hearers of the Apostles, in opposition to the blaspheming Jews, that is, of those Gentiles "who, when they heard this, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord," is evident from the context. The persons who then believed, appear to have been under a previous preparation for receiving the Gospel ; and were, probably, religious proselytes associating with the Jews.

Luke x. 20 : "But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." The inference from this text is, that there is a register of all the elect in "the book of life," and that their number, according to the doctrine of the Synod of Dort, is fixed and determinate. Our Calvinistic friends forget, however, that names may be "blotted out of the book of life ;" and so the theory falls : "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."



Prov. xvi. 4: "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." If there be any relevance in this passage to the Calvinistic theory, it must be taken in the supralapsarian sense, that the final cause of the creation of the wicked is their eternal punishment. It follows from this, that sin is not the cause of punishment, but that this flows from the mere will of God; which is a sufficient refutation. The persons spoken of are wicked. Either they were made wicked by themselves or by God. If not by God, then to make the wicked for the day of evil, can only mean that he renders them who have made themselves wicked, and remain incorrigibly so, the instruments of glorifying his justice, "in the day of evil," that is, in the day of punishment. The Hebrew phrase, rendered literally, is, "The Lord doth work all things for himself;" which applies as well to acts of government as to acts of creation. Thus, then, we are taught by the passage, not that God created the wicked to punish them, but so governs, controls, and subjects all things to himself, and so orders them for the accomplishment of his purpose, that the wicked shall not escape his just displeasure; since upon such men "the day of evil" will ultimately come. It is, therefore, added in the next verse, "Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished."\*

John xii. 37—40: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

Mr. Scott's interpretation is, in its first aspect, more moderate than that of many Divines of the same school. It is,

\* Holden translates the verse, "Jehovah hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked he daily sustains;" and observes, "Should the received translation be deemed correct, 'the day of evil' would be considered, by a Jew of the age of Solomon, to mean, the day of trouble and affliction."

“They had long shut their own eyes, and hardened their own hearts; and so God would give up many of them to such judicial blindness, as rendered their conversion and salvation impossible. The prophecy was not the motive or cause of their wickedness; but it was the declaration of God’s purpose, which could not be defeated: Therefore, whilst this prophecy stood in Scripture against them, and others of like character, who hated the truth from the love of sin, the event became certain; in which sense it is said, that they could not believe.”

That, in some special and aggravated cases, and especially in that which consisted in ascribing the miracles of Christ to Satan, and thus blaspheming the Holy Ghost, (cases, however, which probably affected but a few individuals, and those principally the chief Pharisees and Rabbies of our Lord’s time,) there was such a judicial dereliction as Mr. Scott speaks of, is allowed; but that it extended to the body of the Jews, who at that time did not believe in the mission and miracles of Christ, may be denied. The contrary must appear from the earnest manner in which their salvation was sought by Christ and his Apostles, subsequently to this declaration; and also from the fact of great numbers of this same people being afterwards brought to acknowledge and embrace Christ and his religion. This is our objection to the former part of this interpretation. Not every one who is lost finally is given up previously to judicial blindness. To be thus abandoned before death is a special procedure, which our Lord himself confines to the special case of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. To the latter part of the comment, the objection is still stronger. Mr. Scott acknowledges the wicked and wilful blindness of these Jews to be the cause of the judicial dereliction supposed. From this it would naturally follow, that this wilful blinding, and hardening of their hearts, was the true reason why they “could not believe,” as provoking God to take away his Holy Spirit from them. But Mr. Scott cannot stop here. He will have another cause for their incapacity to believe; not, indeed, the prophecy quoted from Isaiah by the Evangelist, but “God’s purpose,” of which that prediction, he says, was the “declaration.” It follows, then, that “they could not

believe," because it was "God's purpose, which could not be defeated." Agreeably to this, Mr. Scott understands the prediction as asserting, that the agent in blinding the eyes of the people reprov'd, that is, the obstinate Jews, was God himself.

Let us, however, more particularly examine this passage, and we shall find,

1. That it affirms, not that their eyes should be blinded, or their ears closed, by a divine agency, as assumed by Mr. Scott and other Calvinists. This notion is not found in Isaiah vi., from which the quotation is made. There the agent is represented to be the Prophet himself. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes," &c. Now, as the Prophet could exert no secret direct influence over the minds of the disobedient Jews, he must have fulfilled this commission, if it be taken literally, by preaching to them a fallacious and obdurate doctrine, like that of the false Prophets; but if, as we know, he preached no such doctrine, then are the words to be understood according to the genius of the Hebrew language, which often represents him as an agent, who is the occasion, however innocent and undesigned, of any thing being done by another. Thus the Prophet, in consequence of the unbelief of the Jews of his day in those promises of Messiah he was appointed to deliver, and which led him to complain, "Who hath believed our report?" became an occasion to the Jews of making their own hearts fat, and their ears heavy, and of shutting their eyes against his testimony. The true agents were, however, the Jews themselves; and by all who knew the genius of the Hebrew language, they would be understood as so charged by the Prophet. Thus the Septuagint, the Arabic, and the Syriac versions, all agree in rendering the text; so that the people themselves, to whom the Prophet wrote, are made the agents of doing that which, in the style of the Hebrews, is ascribed to the Prophet himself. So also, it is manifest that St. Paul, who quotes the same scripture, Acts xxviii. 25—27, understood the Prophet: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet unto our fathers, saying,



Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive : For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed ; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” Nor in the passage as it is given by St. John, is the blinding of the eyes of the Jews attributed to God. It stands, it is true, in our version, “He hath blinded their eyes,” &c. But the Greek verbs have no nominative case expressed, and it is left to be supplied by the reader. Nor does the context mention the agent ; and further, if we supply the pronoun “he,” we cannot refer it to God, since the passage closes with a change of person, “and I should heal them.” The agent blinding and hardening, and the agent attempting to heal, cannot, therefore, be the same, because they are opposed to each other, not only grammatically, but in design and operation. The agent, then, may be “the god of this world,” to whom the work of blinding them that believe not, is expressly attributed by the Apostle Paul ; or St. John, familiar with the Hebrew style, might refer it to the Prophet, who consequentially, and through the wilful perverseness of the Jews, was the occasion of their making their own hearts gross, and closing their ears ; or, finally, the personal verb may be used impersonally, and the active form for the passive, of which critics furnish parallel instances.\* But in all these views the true responsible agent and criminal doer is “this people,” this perverse and obstinate people themselves ; a point to which every part of their Scriptures gives abundant testimony.

2. It may be denied that the prophecy of Isaiah here quoted is, as Mr. Scott represents it, “a declaration of God’s purpose, which could not be defeated.” A simple prophecy is not a declaration of purpose at all, but the declaration of a future event. If a purpose of God, to be hereafter accom-

\* See Whitby’s Paraphrase and Annot., and his Discourse on the Five Points, chap. i.

plished, be declared, this declaration becomes more than a simple prophecy ; it connects the act with an agent ; and in the case before us, that agent is assumed to be God. But we have shown, that the agent in blinding the eyes and closing the ears of these perverse Jews, is no where said to be God ; and therefore the prophecy is not a declaration of His purpose. Again : If it were a declaration of God's purpose, it would not follow that it could not be defeated ; for prophetic threatenings are not absolute, but imply conditions. This is so far from being a mere assumption, that it is established by the authority of Almighty God himself, who declares, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it ; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." (Jeremiah xviii. 7, 8.) Here we have a prophetic commination uttered ; "at what instant I speak,"—"that nation against whom I have pronounced ;" we have also the purpose in the mind of God,—“the evil that I thought :” And yet this prediction might fail, and this purpose be defeated. So in the case of repentant Nineveh, the predicted destruction failed, and the wrathful purpose was defeated, without any impeachment of the divine attributes ; on the contrary, they were illustrated by this manifestation of the mingled justice and grace of his administration. Mr. Scott, like many others, argues as though the prediction of an event gave certainty to it. But the certainty or uncertainty of events is not created by prophecy. Prophecy results from prescience ; and prescience has respect to what will be, but not necessarily to what must be. Of this, however, more in its proper place.

3. If this prophecy could be made to bear all that the Calvinists impose upon it, it would not serve their purpose. It would, even then, afford no proof of general election and reprobation, since it has an exclusive application to the unbelieving part of the Jewish people only ; and is never adduced, either by St. John or by St. Paul, as the ground of any general doctrine whatever.

Jude 4 : "For there are certain men crept in unawares,

who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men," &c.

The word which is here rendered "ordained," is literally "fore-written;" and the word rendered "condemnation," signifies "legal punishment," or "judgment." The passage means, therefore, either that the class of men spoken of had been foretold in the Scriptures, or that their punishment had been there formerly typified, in those examples of ancient times of which several are cited in the following verses; as Cain, Balaam, Korah, and the cities of the plain. Mr. Scott, indeed, very well interprets the text, when he says, "The Lord had foreseen them, for they were of old registered to this condemnation; many predictions had, from the beginning, been delivered to this effect." But when he adds, "Nay, these predictions had been extracts, as it were, from the registers of heaven; even the secret and eternal decrees of God, in which he had determined to leave them to their pride and lusts, till they merited and received this condemnation," we may well ask for the proof. All this is manifestly gratuitous; brought to the text, and not deduced from it; and is, therefore, very unworthy of a commentator. The extracts from the register of God's decrees, as they are found in the Scriptures, contain no such sentiment as, that these abusers of the grace of God only did that which they could not but do, in consequence of having been left to their pride and lusts; and excluded, before they were born, from the mercies of Christ. If this sentiment, then, is not in the extracts, it is not in the original register; or else something is there which God, in his own revealed word, has not extracted, and respecting which the commentator must either have had some independent revelation, or have been guilty of speaking very rashly. On the contrary, in the parallel passage in 2 Peter ii. 1—3, where the same class of persons is certainly spoken of, so far are they from being represented as excluded from the benefits of Christ's redemption, that they are charged with a specific crime, which necessarily implies their participation in it,—with the crime of "denying the Lord that bought them."



1 Cor. iv. 7: "For who maketh thee to differ from another?"

The context shows that the Apostle was here endeavouring to repress that ostentation which had arisen among many persons in the church of Corinth, on account of their spiritual gifts and endowments. This he does by referring those gifts to God, as the sole giver,—“For who maketh thee to differ?” or, Who confers superiority upon thee? as the sense obviously is; “and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” Mr. Scott acknowledges that “the Apostle is here speaking more immediately of natural abilities, and spiritual gifts; and not of special and efficacious grace.” If so, then the passage has nothing to do with this controversy. The argument, he however affirms, concludes equally in one case, as in the other; and in his Sermon on Election, he thus applies it: “Let the blessings of the Gospel be fairly proposed, with solemn warnings and pressing invitations, to two men of exactly the same character and disposition; if they are left to themselves in entirely similar circumstances, the effect must be precisely the same. But, behold, while one proudly scorns and resents the gracious offer, the other trembles, weeps, prays, repents, believes! Who maketh this man to differ from the other? to what hath he that he hath not received? The scriptural answer to this question, when properly understood, decides the whole controversy.”\*

As this is a favourite argument, and a popular dilemma, in the hands of the Calvinists, and so much is supposed to depend upon its solution, we may somewhat particularly examine it.

Instead of supposing the case of two men “of exactly the same character and disposition,” why not suppose the same man in two moral states? For one man who “proudly scorns the Gospel,” does not more differ from another who penitently receives it, than the same man who has once scoffingly rejected it, and afterwards meekly submitted to it, differs from himself; as, for instance, Saul the Pharisee from Paul the Apostle.

\* Calvin puts the matter in much the same way.—*Inst.*, lib. iii., c. 24.

Now, to account for the case of two men, one receiving the Gospel, and the other rejecting it, the theory of election is brought in ; but in the case of the one man in two different states, this theory cannot be resorted to. The man was elect from eternity ; he is no outcast from the mercy of his God, and the redemption of his Saviour ; and yet, in one period of his life, he proudly scorns the offered mercy of Christ ; at another, he accepts it. It is clear, then, that the doctrine of election, simply considered in itself, will not solve the latter case ; and, by consequence, it will not solve the former : For the mere fact, that one man rejects the Gospel whilst another receives it, is no more a proof of the non-election of the non-recipient, than the fact of a man now rejecting it, who shall afterwards receive it, is a proof of his non-election. The solution, then, must be sought for in some communication of the grace of God, in some inward operation upon the heart, which is supposed to be a consequence of election ; but this leads to another and distinct question. This question is not, however, the vincibility or invincibility of the grace of God ; at least, not in the first instance. It is, in truth, whether there is any operation of the grace of God in man at all tending to salvation, in cases where we see the Gospel rejected. Is the man who rejects perseveringly, and he who rejects but for a time, perhaps a long period of his life, left without any good motions or assisting influence from the grace of God, or not ? This question seems to admit of but one of three answers. Either he has no gracious assistance at all, to dispose him to receive the Gospel ; or he has a sufficient influence of grace so to dispose him ; or that gracious influence is dispensed in an insufficient measure. If the first answer be given, then not only are the non-elect left without any visitations of grace throughout life, but the elect also are left without them, until the moment of their effectual calling. If the second be offered as the answer, then, both in the case of the non-elect man who finally rejects Christ, and in that of the elect man who rejects him for a great part of his life, the saving grace of God must be allowed so to work as to be capable of counteraction, and effectual resistance. If this be denied, then the third answer must be adopted, and

the grace of God must be allowed so to influence as to be designedly insufficient for the ends for which it is given ; that is, it is given for no saving end at all, either as to the non-elect, or as to the elect all the time they remain in a state of actual alienation from Christ. For if an insufficient degree of grace is bestowed, when a sufficient degree might have been imparted, then there must have been a reason for restraining the degree of grace to an insufficient measure ; which reason could only be, that it might be insufficient, and therefore not saving. Now, two of the three of these positions are manifestly contrary to the word of God. To say that no gracious influence of the Holy Spirit operates upon the unconverted, is to take away their guilt ; since they cannot be guilty of rejecting the Gospel if they have no power to embrace it, either from themselves or by impartation, whilst yet the Scripture represents this as the highest guilt of men. All the exhortations, and reproofs, and invitations of Scripture, are, also, by this doctrine, turned into mockery and delusion. And, finally, there can be no such thing in this case, as “ resisting the Holy Ghost ;” as “ grieving and quenching the Spirit ;” as “ doing despite to the Spirit of grace ;” either in the case of the non-elect, who are never converted, or of the elect before conversion : So that the latter have never been guilty of stubbornness, and obstinacy, and rebellion, and resistance of grace ; though these are by them, afterwards, always acknowledged among their sins. Nor did they ever feel any good motion, or drawing, from the Spirit of God, before what they term their “ effectual calling ;” though it is presumed that few, if any, of them will deny this in fact.

If the doctrine that no grace is imparted before conversion is, then, contradicted both by Scripture and experience, how will the case stand, as to the intentional restriction of that grace to a degree which is insufficient to dispose the subject to the acceptance of the Gospel ? If this view be held, it must be maintained equally as to the elect before their conversion, and as to the non-elect. In that case, then, we have equal difficulty in accounting for the guilt of man, as when it is supposed that no grace at all is imparted ; and for the reproofs, calls, and



invitations, and threatenings of the word of God. For where lies the difference between the absolute non-impartation of grace, and grace so imparted as to be designedly insufficient for salvation? Plainly, there is none, except that we can see no end at all for giving insufficient grace; a circumstance which would only serve to render still more perplexing the principles and practice of the divine administration. It has no end of mercy, and none of justice; nor, as far as can be perceived, of wisdom. Not of mercy, for it effects nothing merciful, and designs not to effect it; not of justice, for it places no man under equitable responsibility; not of wisdom, for it has no assignable end. The Scripture treats all men to whom the Gospel is preached as endowed with power, not indeed from themselves, but from the grace of God, to “turn at his reproof;” to come at his “call;” to embrace his “grace;” but they have no capacity for any of these acts, if either of these opinions be true: And thus the word of God is contradicted. So also is experience, in both cases; for there could be no sense of guilt for having rejected Christ, and grieved the Holy Spirit, either in the non-elect never converted, or in the elect before conversion, if either they had no visitations of grace at all, or if these were designedly granted in an insufficient degree.

It follows, then, that the doctrine of the impartation of grace to the unconverted, in a sufficient degree to enable them to embrace the Gospel, must be admitted; and with this doctrine comes in that of a power in man to use or to spurn this heavenly gift and gracious assistance; in other words, a power of willing to come to Christ, even when men do not come; a power of considering their ways, and turning to the Lord, when they do not consider them and turn to him; a power of praying, when they do not pray; and a power of believing, when they do not believe;—powers all of grace; all the results of the work of the Spirit in the heart; but powers to be exerted by man, since it is man, and not God, who wills, and turns, and prays, and believes, whilst the influence under which this is done is from the grace of God alone. This is the doctrine which is clearly contained in the words of St. Paul: “Work out your own

salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure ;” where, not only the operation of God, but the co-operation of man, are distinctly marked, and are both held up as necessary to the production of the grand result,—salvation.

It will appear, then, from these observations, that the question, “ Who maketh thee to differ ?” as urged by Mr. Scott and others from the time of Calvin, is a very inapposite one to their purpose ; for,

First. It is a question which the Apostle asks with no reference to a difference in religious state, but only with respect to gifts and endowments. Secondly. The Holy Ghost gives no authority for such an application of his words, as is thus made, in any other part of Scripture. Thirdly. It cannot be employed for the purpose for which it is dragged forth so often from its context and meaning ; for, in the use thus made of it, it is falsely assumed, that the two men instanced, the one who rejects, and the other who embraces, the Gospel, are not each endowed with sufficient grace to enable them to receive God’s gracious offer. Now this, we may again say, must either be denied or affirmed. If it be affirmed, then the difference between the two men consists, not where they place it, in the destitution or deficiency on the one hand, or in the plenitude on the other, of the grace of God, but in the use of grace : And when they say, “ It is God which maketh them to differ,” they say, in fact, that it is God that not only gives sufficient grace to each, but uses that grace for them. For if it be allowed that a sufficient grace for repentance and faith is given to each, then the true difference between them is, that one repents, and the other does not repent ; the one believes, and the other does not believe : If, therefore, this difference is to be attributed to God directly, then the act of repenting, and the act of believing, are both the acts of God. If they hesitate to avow this, (for it is an absurdity,) then either they must give up the question as totally useless to them, or else take the other side of the alternative, that to all who reject the Gospel, sufficient grace to receive it is not given. How, then, will that serve them ? They may say, it is true, when they take the man who

embraces the Gospel, "Who maketh him to differ but God, who gives this sufficient grace to him?" But then we have an equal right to take the man who rejects the Gospel, and ask, "Who maketh him to differ from the man that embraces it?" To this they cannot reply, that he maketh himself to differ; for that which they here lay down is, that he has either no grace at all imparted to him to enable him to act as the other, or, what amounts to the same thing, no sufficient degree of it to produce a true faith; that he never had that grace; that he is, and always must remain, as destitute of it as when he was born. He does not, therefore, make himself to differ from the man who embraces the Gospel; for he has no power to imitate his example, and to make himself equal with him; and the only answer to our question is, that it is God who maketh him to differ from the other, by withholding that grace by which alone he could be prevented from rejecting the Gospel; and this, so far from "settling the whole controversy," is the very point in debate.

This dilemma, then, will prove, when examined, but inconvenient to themselves; for if sufficiency of grace be allowed to the unconverted, then the Calvinists make the acts of grace, as well as the gift of grace itself, to be the work of God in the elect: If sufficiency of grace is denied, then the unbelief and condemnation of the wicked are not from themselves, but from God.\* The fact is, that this supposed puzzle has been always used *ad captandum*, and is unworthy so grave a controversy; and as to the pretence, that the admission of a power in man to use or to abuse the grace of God involves some merit or ground of glorying in man himself, this is equally fallacious. The power "to will and to do" is the sole result of the working of God in man. All is of grace: "By the grace of God," must every one say, "I am what I am." Here is no dispute; every good thought, desire, and tendency, of the heart, and all its power to turn these to practical account by prayer, by faith,

\* This Calvin scruples not to say, "The supreme Lord, therefore, by depriving of the communication of his light, and leaving in darkness, those whom he has reprobated, makes way for the accomplishment of his own predestination."—*Inst.*, lib. iii., c. 34.



by the use of the means of grace, through which new power "to will and to do," new power to use grace, as well as new grace, is communicated, are of God. Every good act, therefore, is the use of a communicated power which is given of grace, as the stretching out of the withered hand of the healed man was the use of the power communicated to his imbecility, and still working with the act, though not the act itself; and to attempt to lay a ground of boasting and self-sufficiency in the assisted acceptance of the grace of God by us, and the empowered submission of our hearts to it, is as manifestly absurd as it would be to say, that the man whose arm was withered had great reason to congratulate himself on his share in the glory of the miracle, because he himself stretched out the invigorated member at the command of Christ; and because it was not, in fact, lifted up by the hand of Him who, in that act of faith and obedience, had healed him.

The question of the invincibility of divine grace is a point to be in another place considered.

Acts xviii. 9, 10: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city."

Mr. Scott, to whom the doctrine of election is always present, says, "In this, Christ evidently spake of those who were his by election, the gift of the Father, and his own purchase; though, at that time, in an unconverted state."\* It would have been more evident, had this been said by the writer of the Acts as well as by Mr. Scott, or any thing approaching to it. The evidence, we fear, was all in Mr. Scott's predisposition of mind; for it nowhere else appears. The expression is, at least, capable of two very satisfactory interpretations, independent of the theory of Calvinistic election. It may mean, that there were many well-disposed and serious inquirers among the Greeks in Corinth; for when Paul turned from the Jews, he "entered into the house of Justus, one that worshipped God." This man was a Greek proselyte; and, from various parts of the Acts of the Apostles, it is plain, that this

\* Notes *in loc.*

class of people were not only numerous, but generally received the Gospel with joy, and were among the first who joined the primitive churches. They manifested their readiness to receive the Gospel in Corinth itself, when the Jews “opposed and blasphemed;” and it is not improbable, that to such proselytes, who were in many places “a people prepared of the Lord,” reference is made, when our Saviour, speaking to Paul in this vision, says, “I have much people in this city.” Suppose, however, he speaks prospectively and prophetically, making his foreknowledge of an event the means of encouraging the labours of his devoted Apostle, the doctrine of election follows neither from the fact of the foreknowledge of God, nor from prophetic declarations grounded upon it. Even Calvin founds not election upon God’s foreknowledge, but upon his decree.

A few other passages might be added, which are sometimes adduced as proofs of the Calvinistic theory of “election” and “distinguishing grace;” but they are all either explained by that view of scriptural election which has been at large adduced, or are of very obvious interpretation. I believe that I have omitted none, on which any great stress is laid in the controversy; and the reader will judge how far those which have been examined serve to support the inferences that tend to limit the universal import of those declarations which prove, in the literal sense of the terms, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, “by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.”

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### *Theories which limit the Extent of the Death of Christ.*

WE have, in the foregoing attempt to establish the doctrine of the redemption of all mankind against our Calvinistic brethren, taken their scheme in the sense in which it is usually understood, without noticing those minuter shades with which the system has been varied. In this discussion, it is hoped that no expression has hitherto escaped inconsistent with candour. Doctrinal truth would be as little served by this as Christian charity; nor ought it ever to be forgotten by the theological inquirer, that the system which we have brought under review has, in some of its branches, always embodied, and often preserved from neglect, in various parts of Christendom, that truth which is vital to the church, and salutary to the souls of men. It has numbered, too, among its votaries, many venerable names; and many devoted and holy men, whose writings often rank among the brightest lights of scriptural criticism and practical divinity. We may think the peculiarities of their creed clearly opposed to the sense of Scripture, and fairly chargeable in argument with all those repulsive consequences already deduced from them; and which, were it necessary to the discussion, might be characterized in still stronger language. Those consequences, however, let it be observed, are only exhibited as logical ones. By many of this class of Divines they are denied; by others, modified; and by a third party explained away to their own satisfaction by means of metaphysical and subtle distinctions. As logical consequences only they are, therefore, in such cases, fairly to be charged upon our opponents, in any disputes which may arise. By keeping this distinction in view, the discussion of these points may be preserved unfettered, and candour and charity sustain no wound.



We shall now proceed to justify the general view we have taken of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, predestination, and partial redemption, by adducing the sentiments of Calvin himself, and of Calvinistic theologians and churches ; after which, our attention may be directed, briefly, to some of those more modern modifications of the system, which, although they differ not so materially from the original model as some of their advocates suppose, yet make concessions not unimportant to the doctrine of God's universal love to our fallen race.

Calvin has at large opened his sentiments on election, in the Third Book of his Institutes : \* “ Predestination we call the eternal decree of God ; by which he hath determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with similar destiny ; but eternal life is fore-ordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated, either to life, or to death.” After having spoken of the election of the race of Abraham, and then of particular branches of that race, he proceeds : “ Though it is sufficiently clear, that God, in his secret counsel, freely chooses whom he will, and rejects others, his gratuitous election is but half displayed till we come to particular individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner that the certainty of the effect is liable to no suspense or doubt.” He sums up the chapter, in which he thus generally states the doctrine, in these words : “ In conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of the Scripture, we assert, that, by an eternal and immutable counsel, God hath once for all determined both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on his gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit ; but that to those whom he devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment. In the elect,

\* The following quotations are made from Allen's translation, Lond. 1823.

we consider calling as an evidence of election ; and justification as another token of its manifestation, till they arrive in glory, which constitutes its completion. As God seals his elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of his name, and sanctification of his Spirit, he affords another indication of the judgment that awaits them." \*

In the commencement of the following chapter he thus rejects the notion that predestination is to be understood as resulting from God's foreknowledge of what would be the conduct of either the elect or the reprobate : "It is a notion commonly entertained, that God, foreseeing what would be the respective merits of every individual, makes a correspondent distinction between different persons ; that he adopts as his children such as he foreknows will be deserving of his grace ; and devotes to the damnation of death others, whose dispositions he sees will be inclined to wickedness and impiety. Thus they not only obscure election by covering it with the veil of foreknowledge, but pretend that it originates in another cause." † Consistently with this, he a little farther on asserts, that election does not flow from holiness, but holiness from election : "For when it is said, that the faithful are elected that they should be holy, it is fully implied, that the holiness they were in future to possess had its origin in election." He proceeds to quote the example of Jacob and Esau, as loved and hated before they had done good or evil, to show that the only reason of election and reprobation is to be placed in God's "secret counsel." He will not allow the future wickedness of the reprobate to have been considered in the decree of their rejection, any more than the righteousness of the elect, as influencing their better fate : "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. You see how he (the Apostle) attributes both to the mere will of God. If, therefore, we can assign no reason why he grants mercy to his people but because such is his pleasure, neither shall we find any other cause but his will for the reprobation

\* Chap. 21, book iii.

† Book iii., chap. 22.

of others. For when God is said to harden, or show mercy to whom he pleases, men are taught by this declaration, to seek no cause beside his will."\* "Many, indeed, as if they wished to avert odium from God, admit election in such a way as to deny that any one is reprobated. But this is puerile and absurd; because election itself could not exist, without being opposed to reprobation;—whom God passes by, he therefore reprobates; and from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his children."†

This is the scheme of predestination as exhibited by Calvin; and it is remarkable, that the answers which he is compelled to give to objections did not unfold to this great and acute man its utter contrariety to the testimony of God, and to all established notions of equity among men. To the objection taken from justice, he replies, "They (the objectors) inquire by what right the Lord is angry with his creatures who had not provoked him by any previous offence; for that to devote to destruction whom he pleases, is more like the caprice of a tyrant, than the lawful sentence of a judge. If such thoughts ever enter into the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration, how exceedingly presumptuous it is, only to inquire into the causes of the divine will; which is, in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent on which it depends, which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it." The evasions are here curious. 1. He assumes the very thing in dispute, that God has willed the destruction of any part of the human race, "for no other cause than because he wills it;" of which assumption there is not only not a word of proof in Scripture; but, on the contrary, all Scripture ascribes the death of him that dieth to his own will, and not to the will of God; and therefore contradicts his statement.

\* Book iii., chap. 22.

† Ibid., chap. 23.



2. He pretends that to assign any cause to the divine will is to suppose something antecedent to, something above, God, and therefore impious ; as if we might not suppose something in God to be the rule of his will, not only without any impiety, but with truth and piety ; as, for instance, his perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness ; or, in other words, to believe the exercise of his will to flow from the perfection of his whole nature ; a much more honourable and scriptural view of the will of God than that which subjects it to no rule, even in the nature of God himself. 3. When he calls the will of God, “the highest rule of justice,” beyond which we cannot push our inquiries, he confounds the will of God, as a rule of justice to us, and as a rule to himself. This will is our rule ; yet, even then, because we know that it is the will of a perfect being : But when Calvin represents mere will as constituting God’s own rule of justice, he shuts out knowledge, discrimination of the nature of things, and holiness ; which is saying something very different from that great truth, that God cannot will any thing but what is perfectly just. It is to say that blind will, will which has no respect to any thing but itself, is God’s highest rule of justice ; a position which, if presented abstractedly, many even of the ultra Calvinists would spurn. 4. He determines the question by the authority of his own metaphysics, and totally forgets that one *dictum* of inspiration overturns his whole theory,—God “willeth all men to be saved ;” a declaration, which in no part of the sacred volume is opposed or limited by any contrary declaration.

Calvin is not, however, content thus to leave the matter ; but resorts to an argument, in which he has been generally followed by those who have adopted his system with some mitigations : “As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty, but in the most equitable estimation of justice. If all whom the Lord predestinates to death are, in their natural condition, liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him ?” To this Calvin very fairly states the obvious rejoinder made in his day ; and which

the common sense of mankind will always make,—“They object, Were they not by the decree of God antecedently predestinated to that corruption which is now stated as the cause of their condemnation? When they perish in their corruption, therefore, they only suffer the punishment of that misery into which, in consequence of his predestination, Adam fell, and precipitated his posterity with him.” The manner in which Calvin attempts to refute this objection, shows how truly unanswerable it is upon his system. “I confess,” says he, “indeed, that all the descendants of Adam fell, by the divine will, into that miserable condition in which they are now involved; and this is what I asserted from the beginning, that we must always return at last to the sovereign determination of God’s will; the cause of which is hidden in himself. But it follows not, therefore, that God is liable to this reproach; for he will answer them in the language of Paul, ‘O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?’” That is, in order to escape the pinch of the objection, he assumes that St. Paul affirms that God has formed a part of the human race for eternal misery; and that, by imposing silence upon them, he intended to declare that this proceeding in God was just. Now the passage may be proved from the context to mean no such thing; but, if that failed, and it were more obscure in its meaning than it really is, such an interpretation would be contradicted by many other plain texts of holy writ, of which Calvin takes no notice. Even if this text would serve the purpose better, it gives no answer to the objection; for we are brought round again, as indeed Calvin confesses, to his former, and indeed only, argument, that the whole matter, as he states it, is to be referred back to the divine will; which will, though perfectly arbitrary, is, as he contends, the highest rule of justice: “I say, with Augustine, that the Lord created those whom he certainly foreknew would fall into destruction; and that this was actually so, because he willed it; but of his will, it belongs not to us to demand the reason, which we are incapable of comprehending; nor is it reasonable, that the divine will

should be made the subject of controversy with us, which is only another name for the highest rule of justice." Thus he shuts us out from pursuing the argument. When God places fences against our approach, we grant that we are bound not "to break through and gaze;" but not so when man, without any warrant, usurps this authority, and warns us off from his own inclosures, as though we were trespassing upon the peculiar domains of God himself. Calvin's evasion proves the objection unanswerable. For if all is to be resolved into the mere will of God as to the destruction of the reprobate; if they were created for this purpose, as Calvin expressly affirms; if they fell into their corruption in pursuance of God's determination; if, as he had said before, "God passes them by, and reprobates them, from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance of his children," why refer to their natural corruption at all, and their being odious to God in that state, since the same reason is given for their corruption as for their reprobation?—not any fault of theirs; but the mere will of God, "the reprobation hidden in his secret counsel," and that not grounded on the visible and tangible fact of their demerit. Thus the election taught by Calvin is not a choice of some persons to peculiar grace from the whole mass, equally deserving of punishment; (though this is a sophism;) for, in that case, the decree of reprobation would rest upon God's foreknowledge of those passed by as corrupt and guilty, which notion he rejects: "For since God foresees future events only in consequence of his decree that they shall happen, it is useless to contend about foreknowledge, while it is evident that all things come to pass rather by ordination and decree." "It is a horrible decree, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future fate of man before he created him; and that he did foreknow it, because it was appointed by his own decree." Agreeably to this, he repudiates the distinction between will and permission: "For what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will? It is not probable, however, that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, and without any appointment, of God."



With this doctrine he again makes a singular attempt to reconcile the demerit of men : “ Their perdition depends on the divine predestination in such a manner, that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. For the first man fell because the Lord had determined it should so happen. The reason of this determination is unknown to us. Man, therefore, falls according to the appointment of divine Providence ; but he falls by his own fault. The Lord had a little before pronounced every thing that he had made to be ‘ very good.’ Whence, then, comes the depravity of man to revolt from his God ? Lest it should be thought to come from creation, God approved and commended what had proceeded from himself. By his own wickedness, therefore, man corrupted the nature he had received pure from the Lord, and by his fall he drew all his posterity with him to destruction.” It is in this way that Calvin attempts to avoid the charge of making God the author of sin. But how God should not merely permit the defection of the first man, but appoint it, and will it, and that his will should be the “ necessity of things,” all which he had before asserted, and yet that Deity should not be the author of that which he appointed, willed, and imposed a necessity upon, would be rather a delicate inquiry. It is enough that Calvin rejects the impious doctrine ; and, even though his principles directly lead to it, since he has put in his disclaimer, he is entitled to be exempted from the charge ; but the logical conclusion is inevitable.

In much the same manner he contends that the necessity of sinning is laid upon the reprobate by the ordination of God, and yet denies God to be the author of their sin, since the corruption of men was derived from Adam, by his own fault, and not from God. Here, also, although the difficulty still remains of conceiving how a necessity of sinning should be laid on the descendants of Adam, and that without any counteraction of grace in the case of the reprobate, and that this should be attributable to the will of God as its cause, whilst yet God, in no sense injurious to his perfections, is to be regarded as the author of sin, we still admit Calvin’s disclaimer ; but then he cannot have the advantage on both sides, and must renounce

this or some of his former positions. He exhorts us “rather to contemplate the evident cause of condemnation, which is nearer to us, in the corrupt nature of mankind, than search after a hidden and altogether incomprehensible one, in the predestination of God.” “For though, by the eternal providence of God, man was created to that misery to which he is subject, yet the ground of it he has derived from himself, not God; since he is thus ruined, solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure creation of God to vicious and impure depravity.” Thus, almost in the same breath, he affirms that men became reprobate from no other cause than “the will of God,” and his “sovereign determination;” that men have no reason “to expostulate with God, if they are predestinated to eternal death, without any demerit of their own, merely by his sovereign will;” and then, that the corrupt nature of mankind is the evident and nearer cause of condemnation; (which cause, however, was still a matter of appointment and ordination, not permission;) and that man is “ruined solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure state in which God created him.” Now these propositions manifestly fight with each other; for if the reason of reprobation be laid in man’s corruption, it cannot be laid in the mere will and sovereign determination of God, unless we suppose him to be the author of sin. It is this offensive doctrine only which can reconcile them. For if God so wills, and appoints, and necessitates, the depravity of man, as to be the author of it, then there is no inconsistency in saying that the ruin of the reprobate is both from the mere will of God, and from the corruption of their nature, which is but the result of that will. The one is, then, as Calvin states, the “evident and nearer cause,” the other the more remote and hidden one; yet they have the same source, and are substantially acts of the same will. But if it be denied that God is, in any sense, the author of evil, and if sin is from man alone, then is the corruption of nature the effect of an independent will; and if this corruption be the “real source,” as he says, of men’s condemnation, then the decree of reprobation rests not upon the sovereign will of God, as its sole cause, which he affirms; but

upon a cause dependent on the will of the first man : But as this is denied, then the other must follow. Calvin himself, indeed, contends for the perfect concurrence of these proximate and remote causes, although, in point of fact, to have been perfectly consistent with himself, he ought rather to have called the mere will of God “ the cause of the decree of reprobation,” and the corruption of man “ the means by which it is carried into effect ;”—language which he sanctions, and which many of his followers have not scrupled to adopt.

So fearfully does this opinion involve in it the consequences, that in sin man is the instrument, and God the actor, that it cannot be maintained, as stated by Calvin, without this conclusion. For as two causes of reprobation are expressly laid down, they must be either opposed to each other, or be consenting. If they are opposed, the scheme is given up ; if consenting, then are both reprobation and human corruption the results of the same will, the same decree and necessity. It would be trifling to say, that the decree does not influence ; for if so, it is no decree in Calvin’s sense, who understands the decree of God, as the foregoing extracts and the whole third book of his Institutes plainly show, as appointing what shall be, and by that appointment making it necessary. Otherwise, he could not reject the distinction between will and permission, and avow the sentiment of St. Augustine, “ that the will of God is the necessity of things ; and that what he has willed will necessarily come to pass.”\* So, in writing to Castellio, he makes the sin of Adam the result of an act of God : “ You say Adam fell by his free will. I except against it. That he might not fall, he stood in need of that strength and constancy with which God armeth all the elect, as long as he will keep them blameless. Whom God has elected, he props up with an invincible power unto perseverance. Why did he not afford this to Adam, if he would have had him stand in his integrity?”† And with this view of necessity, as resulting from the decree of God, the immediate followers of Calvin coincided ; the end and the means, as to the elect, and as to

\* Book iii., chap. 23, sec. 8.

† Quoted in Bishop Womack’s Calvinists’ Cabinet Unlocked, p. 34.



the reprobate, are equally fixed by the decree, and are both to be traced to the appointing and ordaining will of God. On such a scheme it is, therefore, worse than trifling to attempt to make out a case of justice in favour of this assumed divine procedure, by alleging the corruption and guilt of man; a point which, indeed, Calvin himself, in fact, gives up when he says, "that the reprobate obey not the word of God, when made known to them, is justly imputed to the wickedness and depravity of their hearts, provided it be at the same time stated, that they are abandoned to this depravity, because they have been raised up by a just but inscrutable judgment of God, to display his glory in their condemnation."\*

It is by availing themselves of these ineffectual struggles of Calvin to give some colour of justice to his reprobating decree, by fixing upon the corruption of man as a cause of reprobation, that some of his followers have endeavoured, in the very teeth of his own express words, to reduce his system to sublapsarianism. This was attempted by Amyraldus; who was answered by Curcellæus, in his tract, *De Jure Dei in Creaturas*. This last writer, partly by several of the same passages we have given above from Calvin's Institutes, and by extracts from his other writings, proves that Calvin did by no means consider man, as fallen, to be the object of reprobation; but man not yet created; man as to be created, and so reprobated, under no consideration in the divine mind of his fall or actual guilt, except as consequences of an eternal preterition of the persons of the reprobate, resolvable only into the sovereign pleasure of God. The references he makes to men as corrupt, and to their corrupt state as the proximate cause of their rejection, are all manifestly used to parry off rather than to answer objections, and somewhat to soften, as Curcellæus observes, the harsher parts of his system. And, indeed, for what reason are we so often brought back to that unfailing refuge of Calvin and his followers, "the presumption and wickedness of replying against God?" For if reprobation be a matter of human desert, it cannot be a mystery; if it be adequate punishment

\* Inst., book iii., chap. 24, sec. 14.

for an adequate fault, there is no need to urge it upon us to bow with submission to an unexplained sovereignty. We may add, there is no need to speak of a remote or first cause of reprobation, if the proximate cause will explain the whole case; and that Calvin's continual reference to God's secret counsel, and will, and inscrutable judgment, could have no aptness to his argument.\* Among English Divines, Dr. Twisse has sufficiently defended Calvin from the charge, as he esteems it, of sublapsarianism; and, whatever merit 'Twisse's own supralapsarian creed may have, his argument on this point is unanswerable.

This, then, is the doctrine of Calvin, which was followed by several of the churches of the Reformation, who in this respect distinguished themselves from the Lutherans.† It was a doctrine, however, unknown in the primitive churches; and may

\* *Amyraldus tamen, ut eum infra lapsum substituisse probet, in constituendo reprobationis objecto, profert quædam loca in quibus ille corruptæ massæ meminit, et hujus decreti æquitatem ab originali peccato arcessit. Sed facilis est responsio. Nam Calvinus ipse, quâ ratione ista cum iis quæ attuli sint concilianda nos docet; nimirum adhibitâ distinctione inter propinquam reprobationis causam, quam residentem in nobis corruptionem esse vult, et remotam, quæ sit unicum Dei beneplacitum. Et quanquam variis in locis causam propinquam, veluti ad sententiæ suæ duriem emolliendam aptiorem, magis videatur urgere; ita tamen id facit ut non rarò consilii arcani, voluntatis occultæ, judicii inscrutabilis, et similium, quibus primam rejectionis causam solet designare, ibidem simul meminerit.—De Jure Dei, &c., cap. 10.*

† “The Reformed Church, in the largest import of the word, comprises all the religious communities which have separated themselves from the Church of Rome. In this sense the words are often used by English writers; but having been adopted by the French Calvinists to describe their church, this term is most commonly used on the Continent as a general appellation of all the churches who profess the doctrines of Calvin. About the year 1541, the church of Geneva was placed by the Magistrates of that city under the direction of Calvin, where his learning eloquence, and talents for business soon attracted general notice. By degrees his fame reached to every part of Europe. Having prevailed upon the Senate of Geneva to found an academy, and place it under his superintendence; and having filled it with men, eminent throughout Europe for their learning and talent, it became the favourite resort of all persons who leaned to the new principles, and sought religious and literary instruction. From Germany, France, Italy, England, and Scotland, numbers crowded to the new academy, and returned from it to their native countries, saturated with the doctrine of Geneva, and burning with zeal to propagate its creed.”—BUTLER'S *Life of Grotius*.

be ranked among those errors which the pagan philosophy subsequently engrafted upon the faith of Christ.\*

Bishop Tomline's *Refutation of Calvinism*, although very erroneous in some of its doctrinal views, has some valuable and conclusive quotations from the ancient Fathers, proving "that the peculiar tenets of Calvinism are in direct opposition to the doctrines maintained in the first ages." They also show that there is a great similarity between some points in that system and several of the most prevalent of the early heresies: "The Manicheans denied the freedom of the human will; and spoke of the elect as persons who could not sin, or fail of salvation." The fruitful source of these notions was the Gnosticism of early times, which was the worst part of the speculative pagan philosophy, engrafted on a corrupted Christianity; and was vigorously opposed by the Fathers, from the earliest date. In this system of affected and dreaming wisdom it was assumed, that some souls were created bad, and others good; and that they sprung, therefore, from different principles, or creators. Origen contended, in opposition to these speculations, that all souls were by nature of the same quality; that the use of the freedom of the will made the differences we see in practice; and that this liberty rendered them liable to reward and to punishment; ascribing, however, this recovered freedom of the will, which had been lost in Adam, to the grace of Christ. The Platonism which he mixed up with his system was justly resisted in the church; but his doctrine of the freedom of the will prevailed generally in the east. It was afterwards carried to a dangerous extent by Pelagius, whose doctrine was modified by Cassian. These discussions called Augustine into a controversy which carried him to the opposite extreme; and appears to have revived the Manichean notions of his youth, in such a degree as greatly to tinge many parts of his system with that heresy. He was a powerful, but unsteady, writer; and has expressed himself so inconsistently as to have divided the opinions of the

\* This was the view of Melancthon, who in writing to Peucer says, "*Lælius writes to me, and says, that the controversy respecting the Stoical fate is agitated with such uncommon fervour at Geneva, that one individual is cast into prison because he happened to differ from Zeno.*"



Latin Church, where his authority has always been greatest. He held, although his writings afford many passages contradictory of the statement, that "God, from the foundation of the world, decreed to save some men, and to consign others to eternal punishment." Notwithstanding his authority, his views on predestination and grace appear to have made no great impression upon even the western church, where the Collations of Cassian, a disciple of Chrysostom, a work which has been called semi-Pelagian, was held in extensive estimation; so that substantially no great difference of opinion appeared between the western and the Greek churches, on these points, for several centuries. In the ninth century St. Austin's doctrines were revived and asserted by Goteschale, who was as absurdly as wickedly persecuted on that account. His doctrines were condemned in two Councils; and the controversy was laid to rest, until the subtle questions contained in it were revived by the Schoolmen. Thomas Aquinas and the Dominicans adopted the strongest views of Augustine on predestination and necessity, and improved upon them; Scotus and the Franciscans took the opposite side; and the infallibility of the Pope has not yet been employed to settle this point. By condemning Jansenius, however, whilst it has honoured Augustine, that Church, as Bayle observes,\* has involved itself in great perplexities. The authority of this Father with the Church of Rome was indeed an advantage which the first Reformers did not fail to make use of. From him they supported their views on justification by faith; and finding so much of evangelical truth on this and some other subjects in his writings, they were insensibly biassed to the worst parts of his system. Luther recovered from this error in the latter part of his life; and the Lutheran churches became settled in the doctrine of universal redemption.† Augustinism, as perfected and syste-

\* Dictionary, Art. Augustine.

† "It is pleasing," says Dr. Copleston, "and satisfactory, to trace the progress of Melancthon's opinions upon the subject. In the first dawning of the Reformation, he, as well as Luther, had been led into those metaphysical discussions which Calvin afterwards moulded into a system, and incorporated with his exposition of the Christian doctrine. But so early as the year 1529

matized by the able hand of Calvin, was received by several of the Reformed churches; and gave rise to a controversy which has remained to this day, though happily it has of late been conducted with less asperity. The system, as issued by Calvin, has, however, undergone various modifications; some theologians and their followers, having carried out his principles to their full length, so as to advocate or sanction the Antinomian heresy; whilst others, either to avoid this fearful result, or perceiving the discrepancy of the harsher parts of the theory with the word of God, have impressed upon it a more mitigated aspect.

The three leading schemes of predestination, prevalent among the Reformed churches previous to the Synod of Dort, are thus stated in the celebrated Declaration of Arminius before the States of Holland. They comprehend the theories generally known by the names of supralapsarian and sublapsarian.

“The first, or Creabilarian, or supralapsarian opinion is, 1. That God has absolutely and precisely decreed to save certain particular men by his mercy or grace; but to condemn others by his justice; and to do all this, without having any regard in such decree to righteousness or sin, obedience or disobedience, which could possibly exist on the part of one class of men, or the other. 2. That for the execution of the pre-

he renounced this error, and expunged the passages that contained it from the later editions of his *Loci Theologici*. Luther, who had in his early life maintained the same opinions, after the controversy with Erasmus about free-will, never taught them; and although he did not, with the candour of Melancthon, openly retract what he had once written, yet he bestowed the highest commendations on the last editions of Melancthon's work, containing this correction.\* He also scrupled not to assert publicly, that at the beginning of the Reformation his creed was not completely settled;† and in his last work of any importance, he is anxious to point out the qualifications with which all he had ever said on the doctrine of absolute necessity ought to be received: ‘*Vos ergo, qui nunc me audistis, memineritis me hoc docuisse, non esse inquirendum de prædestinatione Dei absconditi, sed in illis acquiescendum, quæ revelantur per vocationem et per ministerium verbi . . . . . Hæc eadem alibi quoque in meis libris protestatus sum, et nunc etiam vivâ voce trado: Ideo sum excusatus.*’‡”

\* Pref. to the first vol. of Luther's Works, A. D. 1546.

† Laur. Bampton Lect., note 21 to Sermon ii.

‡ Op., vol. vi., p. 325.

ceding decree God determined to create Adam, and all men in him, in an upright state of original righteousness; besides which he also ordained them to commit sin, that they might thus become guilty of eternal condemnation, and be deprived of original righteousness. 3. That those persons whom God has thus positively wished to save, he has decreed, not only to salvation, but also to the means which pertain to it; that is, to conduct and bring them to faith in Christ Jesus, and to perseverance in that faith; and that he also leads them to these results by a grace and power that are irresistible; so that it is not possible for them to do otherwise than believe, persevere in faith, and be saved. 4. That to those whom, by his absolute will, God has fore-ordained to perdition, he has also decreed to deny that grace which is necessary and sufficient for salvation; and does not, in reality, confer it upon them; so that they are neither placed in a possible condition, nor in any capacity of believing, or of being saved.”\*

The second opinion differs from the former; but is still supralapsarian. It is,

“1. That God determined within himself, by an eternal immutable decree, to make, according to his good pleasure, the smaller portion out of the general mass of mankind partakers of his grace and glory. But, according to his pleasure, he passed by the greater portion of men, and left them in their own nature, which is incapable of any thing supernatural; and did not communicate to them that saving and supernatural grace by which their nature, if it still retained its integrity, might be strengthened; or by which, if it were corrupted, it might be restored, for a demonstration of his own liberty: Yet after God had made these men sinners, and guilty of death, he punished them with death eternal, for a demonstration of his justice.”—“As far as we are capable of comprehending their scheme of reprobation, it consists of two acts, that of preterition, and that of predamnation. Preterition is

\* This statement of the supralapsarian and the sublapsarian theories, as given by Arminius, might be illustrated and verified by quotations from the elder Calvinistic Divines; the reader will, however, find what is amply sufficient in those given in Bishop Womack's *Calvinists' Cabinet Unlocked*.



antecedent to all things, and to all causes which are either in the things themselves, or which arise out of them ; that is, it has no regard whatever to any sin, and only views man under an absolute and general aspect. Two means are fore-ordained for the execution of the act of preterition ; dereliction in a state of nature which, by itself, is incapable of every thing supernatural ; and the non-communication of supernatural grace, by which their nature, if in a state of integrity, might be strengthened, and, if in a state of corruption, might be restored. Predamnation is antecedent to all things ; yet it does by no means exist without a foreknowledge of the cause of damnation. It views man as a sinner obnoxious to damnation in Adam, and as, on this account, perishing through the necessity of divine justice."

This opinion differs from the first in this, that it does not lay down the creation or the fall as a mediate cause, fore-ordained of God for the execution of the decree of reprobation ; yet this second kind of predestination places election, with regard to the end, before the fall, as also preterition, or passing by, which is the first part of reprobation. "But though the inventors of this scheme," says Arminius, "have been desirous of using the greatest precaution, lest it might be concluded from their doctrine, that God is the author of sin with as much show of probability as it is deducible from the first scheme ; yet we shall discover, that the fall of Adam cannot possibly, according to their views, be considered in any other manner than as a necessary means for the execution of the preceding decree of predestination. For, first, it states that God determined by the decree of reprobation to deny to man that grace which was necessary for the confirmation and strengthening of his nature, that it might not be corrupted by sin ; which amounts to this, that God decreed not to bestow that grace which was necessary to avoid sin ; and from this must necessarily follow the transgression of man, as proceeding from a law imposed upon him. The fall of man is, therefore, a means ordained for the execution of the decree of reprobation.

"2. It states the two parts of reprobation to be preterition

and predamnation. Those two parts (although the latter views man as a sinner, and obnoxious to justice) are, according to that decree, connected together by a necessary and mutual bond, and are equally extensive; for those whom God passed by in conferring grace, are likewise damned. Indeed, no others are damned, except those who are the subjects of this act of preterition. From this, therefore, it must be concluded, that sin necessarily follows from the decree of reprobation or preterition; because, if it were otherwise, it might possibly happen, that a person who had been passed by might not commit sin, and from that circumstance might not become liable to damnation. This second opinion on predestination, therefore, falls into the same inconvenience as the first,—the making God the author of sin.”\*

The third opinion is sublapsarian; in which man, as the object of predestination, is considered as fallen.† It is thus epitomised by Arminius:—

\* Declaration, in Nichols's Translation of Arminius's Works, vol. i., p. 582.

† The question as to the object of the decrees, has gone out, as Goodwin says, among our Calvinistic brethren into “endless digladiations and irreconcilable divisions. Some of them hold, that men simply and indefinitely considered, are the object of these decrees. Others contend, that men considered as yet to be created are this object. A third sort stands up against both the former with this notion, that men considered as already created and made are this object. A fourth disparageth the conjectures of the three former with this conceit, that men considered as fallen are this object. Another findeth a defect in the singleness or simplicity of all the former opinions, and compoundeth this in opposition to them, that men considered both as to be created, and as being created, and as fallen, together, are the proper object of these troublesome decrees. A sixth sort formeth us yet another object, and this is, man considered as salvable, or capable of being saved. A seventh, not liking the faint complexion of any of the former opinions, delivereth this to us as strong and healthful, that men considered as damnable are this object. Others yet again, superfancying all the former, conceive men considered as *creable*, or possible to be created, to be the object so highly contested about. A ninth party disciple the world with this doctrine, that men considered as *labiles*, or capable of falling, are the object; and whether all the scattered and conflicting opinions about the objects of our brethren's decrees of election and reprobation are bound up in this bundle or not, we cannot say.”—*Agreement of Brethren*, &c.

In modern times these subtle distinctions have rather fallen into desuetude among Calvinists, and are reducible to a much smaller number.

“Because God willed within himself from all eternity to make a decree by which he might elect certain men and reprobate the rest, he viewed and considered the human race not only as created, but likewise as fallen, or corrupt; and, on that account, obnoxious to malediction. Out of this lapsed and accursed state God determined to liberate certain individuals, and freely to save them by his grace, for a declaration of his mercy; but he resolved, in his own just judgment, to leave the rest under malediction, for a declaration of his justice. In both these cases God acts without the least consideration of repentance and faith in those whom he elects, or of impenitence and unbelief in those whom he reprobates. This opinion places the fall of man, not as a means fore-ordained for the execution of the decree of predestination, as before explained; but as something that might furnish a *proæresis*, or occasion, for this decree of predestination.” \*

With this opinion, however, the necessity of the fall is so generally connected, that it escapes the difficulties which environ the preceding scheme in words only; for whether, in the decree of predestination, man is considered as creatible, or created and fallen, if a necessity be laid upon any part of the race to sin, and to be made miserable, whether from that which rendered the fall inevitable, or that which rendered the fall the inevitable means of corrupting their nature, and producing entire moral disability without relief, the condition of the reprobate remains substantially the same; and the administration under which they are placed, is equally opposed to justice as to grace. For let us shut out all these fine distinctions between acts of sovereignty and acts of justice, preterition and predamnation, and fully allow the principle, that all are fallen in Adam; in what way can even the sublapsarian doctrine be supported? It has two objects; to avoid the imputation of making God the author of sin, and to repel the charge of his dealing with his creatures unjustly. We need only take the latter as necessary to the argument, and show how utterly they fail to turn aside this most fatal objec-

\* Arminius's Declaration, in Nichols's Translation of his Works, vol. i., page 582.



tion drawn from the justice of the divine nature and administration.

It is an easy and plausible thing to say, in the usual loose and general manner of stating the sublapsarian doctrine, that the whole race having fallen in Adam, and become justly liable to eternal death, God might, without any impeachment of his justice, in the exercise of his sovereign grace, appoint some to life and salvation by Christ, and leave the others to their deserved punishment. But this is a false view of the case, built upon the false assumption that the whole race were personally and individually, in consequence of Adam's fall, absolutely liable to eternal death. That very fact, which is the foundation of the whole scheme, is easy to be refuted on the clearest authority of Scripture; whilst not a passage can be adduced, we may boldly affirm, which sanctions any such doctrine.

“The wages of sin is death.” That the death which is the wages or penalty of sin extends to eternal death, we have before proved. But “sin is the transgression of the law;” and in no other light is it represented in Scripture, when eternal death is threatened as its penalty, than as the act of a rational being sinning against a law known or knowable; and as an act avoidable, and not forced or necessary.

Taking these principles, let them be applied to the case before us.

The scheme of predestination in question contemplates the human race as fallen in Adam. It must, therefore, contemplate them either as seminally in Adam, not being yet born; or as to be actually born into the world.

In the former case, the only actual beings to be charged with sin, “the transgression of the law,” were Adam and Eve; for the rest of the human race, not being actually existent, were not capable of transgressing; or if they were, in a vague sense, capable of it by virtue of the federal character of Adam; yet then only as potential, and not as actual, beings, beings, as the logicians say, *in posse*, not *in esse*. Our first parents rendered themselves liable to eternal death. This is granted; and had they died in the day they sinned,

which, but for the introduction of a system of mercy and long-suffering, and the appointment of a new kind of probation, for any thing that appears, they must have done, the human race would have perished with them, and the only conscious sinners would have been the only conscious sufferers. But then this lays no foundation for election and reprobation ;—the whole race would thus have perished without the vouchsafement of mercy to any.

This predestination must, therefore, respect the human race, fallen in Adam, as to be born actually, and to have a real, as well as a potential, existence ; and the doctrine will be, that the race so contemplated were made unconditionally liable to eternal death. In this case, the decree takes effect immediately upon the fall, and determines the condition of every individual, in respect to his being elected from this common misery, or his being left in it ; and it rests its plea of justice upon the assumed fact, that every man is absolutely liable to eternal death wholly and entirely for the sin of Adam ; a sin to which he was not a consenting party, because he was not in actual existence. But if eternal death be the wages of sin ; and the sin which receives such wages be the transgression of a law by a voluntary agent, (and this is the rule as laid down by God himself,) then on no scriptural principle is the human race to be considered absolutely liable to personal and conscious eternal death for the sin of Adam ; and so the very ground assumed by the advocates of this theory is unfounded.

But perhaps they will bring into consideration the foreknowledge of actual transgression as contemplated by the decree, though this notion is repudiated by Calvin, and the rigid Divines of his school ; but we reply to this, that either the sin of Adam was a sufficient reason for the actual infliction of a sentence of eternal death upon his descendants, or it was not. If not, then no man will be punished with eternal death, as the consequence of Adam's sin ; and that sentence will rest upon actual transgressions alone. If, then, this be allowed, there comes in an important inquiry : Are the actual transgressions of the non-elect evitable or necessary ? If the former, then even the reprobate, without the grace of Christ, which they

cannot have, because he died not for them, may avoid all sin, and consequently keep the whole law of God, and claim, though still reprobates, to be justified by their works. But if sin be unavoidable and necessary as to them, in consequence both of the corrupt nature they have derived from Adam, and the withholding of that sanctifying influence which can be imparted only to the elect, for whom alone Christ died, how are they to be proved justly liable, on that account, to eternal death? This is the penalty of sin; of sin as the transgression of the law: But then law is given only to creatures in a state of trial; either to those who, from their unimpaired powers, are able to keep it, or to those to whom is made the promise of gracious assistance, upon their asking it, in order that they may be enabled to obey the will of God: And in no case are those to whom God issues his commands supposed in Scripture to be absolutely incapable of obedience, much less liable to be punished, without remedy, for not obeying, if so incapacitated. This would, indeed, make the divine Being a hard master, “reaping where he has not sown;” which is the language only of the wicked servant, and therefore to be abhorred by all good men. But if a point so obviously at variance with truth and equity be maintained, the doctrine comes to this,—that men are considered, in the divine decree, as justly liable to eternal death, (their actual sins being foreseen,) because they have been placed by some previous decree, or higher branch of the same decree, in circumstances which necessitate them to sin; a doctrine which raises sublapsarianism into supralapsarianism itself. This is not the view which God gives us of his own justice; and it is contradicted by every notion of justice which has ever obtained among men; nor is it at all relieved by the subtlety of Zanchius and others, who distinguish between being necessitated to sin, and being forced to sin; and argue, that, because in sinning the reprobate follow the motions of their own will, they are justly punishable; though in this they fulfil the predestination of God. The true question is, and it is not at all affected by such merely verbal distinctions, Can the reprobate do otherwise than sin, and could they ever do otherwise? They sin willingly, it is said.



This is granted ; but could they ever will otherwise ? The will is but one of many diseased powers of the soul. Is there, as to them, any cure for this disease of the will ? According to this scheme, there is not ; and they will from necessity, as well as act from necessity ; so that the difficulty, though thrown a step backward, remains in full force.

In support of their notion, that the penalty attached to original sin is eternal death, they allege, it is true, that the Apostle Paul represents all men under condemnation in consequence of their connexion with the first Adam ; and attributes the salvation of those who are rescued from the ruin, only to the obedience of the second Adam. This is granted ; but it will not avail to establish their position, that, the human race being all under an absolute sentence of condemnation to eternal death, Almighty God, in the exercise of his sovereign grace, elected a part of them to salvation, and left the remainder to the justice of their previous sentence. For,

1. Supposing that the whole human race were under condemnation in their sense, this will not account for the punishment of those who reject the Gospel. Their rejecting the Gospel is represented in Scripture as the sole cause of their condemnation, and never merely as an aggravating cause, as though they were under an irreversible previous sentence of death, and that this refusal of the Gospel only heightened a previously certain and inevitable punishment. An aggravated cause of condemnation it is ; but for this reason, that it is the rejection of a remedy, and an abuse of mercy, neither of which could have any place in a previously fixed condition of reprobation. If, therefore, it is true that “ this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,” we must conclude, that the previous state of condemnation was not irremediable and unalterable, or this circumstance, the rejection of the light, or revelation of mercy in the Gospel, could not be their condemnation.

2. Leaving the meaning of the Apostle in Rom. v. out of our consideration for a moment, the Scriptures never place the final condemnation of men upon the ground of Adam’s offence, and their connexion with him. Actual sin forms the ground

of every reprovng charge, of every commination, and, beyond all doubt, of the condemnatory sentence at the day of judgment. To what ought we to refer, as explaining the true cause of the eternal punishment of any portion of our race, but to the proceedings of that day, when that eternal punishment is to be awarded? Of the reason of this proceeding, of the facts to be charged, and of the sins to be punished, we have very copious information in the Scriptures; but these are evil works, and disbelief of the Gospel. No where is it said, or even hinted in the most distant manner, that men will be sentenced to eternal death, at that day, either because of Adam's sin, or because their connexion with Adam made them inevitably corrupt in nature, and unholy in conduct; from which effects they could not escape, because God had from eternity resolved to deny them the grace necessary to this end.

The true view of the Apostle's doctrine in Romans v. is to be ascertained, not by making partial extracts from his discourse, but by taking the argument entire, and in all its parts.

The Calvinist assumes, that the Apostle represents what the penal condition of the human race would have been had not Christ interposed as our Redeemer: Here is one of their great and leading mistakes; for St. Paul does not touch this point. He also assumes, that the whole race of men, but for the decree of election, would not only have come into actual being, but have been actually and individually punished for ever; and, on this assumption, endeavours to justify his doctrine of the arbitrary selection of a part of mankind to grace and salvation, the other being left in the state in which they were found. Even this is contrary to other parts of their own system; for the reprobate are placed in an infinitely worse condition than had they been merely thus left without a share in Christ's redemption; because, even according to Calvinistic interpreters, their condemnation is fearfully aggravated, and by that which they have no means of avoiding, by actual sin and unbelief. But the assumption itself is wholly imaginary. For the Apostle speaks not of what the human race would have been, that is, he affirms nothing as to their penal condition, in case Christ had not undertaken the office of Redeemer; but

he looks at their moral state and penal condition, as the case actually stands; in other words, he takes the state of man as it was actually established after the fall, as recorded in the book of Genesis. No child of Adam was actually born into the world until the promise of a Redeemer had been given, and the virtue of his anticipated redemption had begun to apply itself to the case of the fallen pair; consequently, all mankind are born under a constitution of mercy, which actually existed before their birth. What the race would have been, had not the redeeming plan been brought in, the Scriptures nowhere tell us, except that a sentence of death to be executed "in the day" in which the first pair sinned, was the sanction of the law under which they were placed; and it is great presumption to assume it as a truth, that they would have multiplied their species only for eternal destruction. That the race would have been propagated under an absolute necessity of sinning, and of being made eternally miserable, we may boldly affirm to be impossible; because it supposes an administration contradicted by every attribute which the Scriptures ascribe to God. What the actual state of the human race is, in consequence both of the fall of Adam and of the interposition of Christ, of the imputation of the effects of the offence of the one, and of the obedience of the other, is the only point to which our inquiries can go, and to which, indeed, the argument of the Apostle is confined.

There is, it is true, an imputation of the consequences of Adam's sin to his posterity, independent of their personal offences; but we can only ascertain what these consequences are by referring to the Apostle himself. One of these consequences is asserted explicitly, and others are necessarily implied in this chapter and in other parts of his writings. That which is here explicitly asserted is, that death passed upon all men, though they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, that is, not personally; and, therefore, this death is to be regarded as the result of Adam's transgression alone, and of our having been so far "constituted sinners" in him, as to be liable to it. But then the death of which he here speaks, is the death of the body; for his argument, that



“death reigned from Adam to Moses,” obliges us to understand him as speaking of the visible and known fact, that men in those ages died as to the body, since he could not intend to say that all the generations of men, from Adam to Moses, died eternally. The death of the body, then, is the first effect of the imputation of Adam’s sin to his descendants, as stated in this chapter. A second is necessarily implied; a state of spiritual death,—the being born into the world with a corrupt nature, always tending to actual offence. This is known to be the Apostle’s doctrine, from other parts of his writings; but that passage in this chapter in which it is necessarily implied, is verse 16: “The free gift is of many offences unto justification.” If men need justification of “many offences;” if all men need this, and that under a dispensation of help and spiritual healing; then the nature which universally leads to offences so numerous must be inherently and universally corrupt. A third consequence is a conditional liability to eternal death; for that state which makes us liable to actual sin, makes us also liable to actual punishment. But this is conditional, not absolute; for since the Apostle makes the obedience of Christ available to the forgiveness of the “many offences” we may commit in consequence of the corrupt nature we have derived from Adam, and extends this to all men, they can only perish by their own fault. Now, beyond these three effects we do not find that the Apostle carries the consequence of Adam’s sin. Of unpardoned offences eternal death is the consequence; but these are personal. Of the sin of Adam, imputed, these are the consequences,—the death of the body, and our introduction into the world with a nature tending to actual offences, involving a conditional liability to punishment. But both are connected with a remedy as extensive as the disease. For the first, there is the resurrection from the dead; for the other, the healing of grace, and the promise of pardon; and thus though condemnation has passed upon all men, yet the free gift unto justification of life passes upon all men also; the same general terms being used by the Apostle in each case. The effects of “the free gift” are not immediate; the reign of death remains till the resurrection; but “in Christ

shall all be made alive," and it is every man's own fault, not his fate, if his resurrection be not a happy one. The corrupt nature remains till the healing is applied by the Spirit of God ; but it is provided, and is actually applied in the case of all those dying in infancy, as we have already showed ; \* whilst justification and regeneration are offered, through specified means and conditions, to all who are of the age of reason and choice ; and thus the sentence of eternal death may be reversed. What then becomes of the premises in the sublapsarian theory which we have been examining, that in Adam all men are absolutely condemned to eternal death ? Had Christ not undertaken human redemption, we have no proof, no indication in Scripture, that for Adam's sin any but the actually guilty pair would have been doomed to this condemnation : And though now the race, having become actually existent, is, for this sin, and for the demonstration of God's hatred of sin in general, involved, through a federal relation, and by an imputation of Adam's sin, in the effects above mentioned ; yet a universal remedy is provided.

But we are not to be confined even to this view of the grace of God, when we speak of actual offences. Here the case is even strengthened. The redemption of Christ extends not merely to the removal of the evils laid upon us by the imputation of Adam's transgression, but to those which are the effects of our own personal choice ; to the forgiveness of "many offences," upon our repentance and faith, however numerous and aggravated they may be ; to the bestowing of "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness ;" and not merely to the reversal of the sentence of death, but to our "reigning in life by Jesus Christ ;" so that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound ; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life ;" which phrase, in the New Testament, does never mean less than the glorification of the bodies and souls of believers in the kingdom of God, and in the presence and enjoyment of the eternal glory of Christ.

\* See Part ii., chap. 18.

So utterly without foundation is the leading assumption in the sublapsarian scheme, that the decree of election and reprobation finds the human race in a state of common and absolute liability to personal eternal punishment ; and that by making a sovereign selection of a part of mankind, God does no injustice to the rest by passing them by. The word of God asserts no such doctrine as the absolute condemnation of the race to eternal death, merely for Adam's offence ; and if it did, the merciful result of the obedience of Christ is declared to be not only as extensive as the evil, in respect of the number of persons so involved, but in grace to be more abounding. Finally : This assumption falls short of the purpose for which it is made ; because the mere passing by of a part of the race, already, according to them, under eternal condemnation, and which they contend inflicts no injustice upon them, does not account for their additional and aggravated punishment for doing what they had never the natural or dispensed power of avoiding,—breaking God's holy laws, and rejecting his Gospel. Upon a close examination of the sublapsarian scheme, it will be found, therefore, to involve all the leading difficulties of the Calvinistic theory as it is broadly exhibited by Calvin himself. In both cases, reprobation is grounded on an act of mere will, resting on no reason ; it respects not in either, as its primary cause, the demerit of the creature ; and it punishes eternally without personal guilt, arising either from actual sin, or from the rejection of the Gospel. Both unite in making sin a necessary result of the circumstances in which God has placed a great part of mankind, which, by no effort of theirs, can be avoided, or, what is the same thing, which they shall never be disposed to avoid ; and how either of these schemes, in strict consequence, can escape the charge of making God the author of sin, which the Synod of Dort acknowledges to be blasphemy, is inconceivable. For how does it alter the case of the reprobate, whether the fall of Adam himself was necessitated, or whether he acted freely ? They, at least, are necessitated to sin ; they come into the world under a necessitating constitution, which is the result of an act to which they gave no consent ; and their case differs nothing, except in



circumstances which do not alter its essential character, from that of beings immediately created by God with a nature necessarily producing sinful acts, and to counteract which there is no remedy : A case which few have been bold enough to suppose.

The different views of the doctrine of predestination, as stated above, greatly agitated the Protestant world, from the time of Calvin to the sitting of the celebrated Synod of Dort, whose decisions on this point, having been received as a standard by several churches and by many theologians, may next be properly introduced ; although, after what has been said, they call only for brief remark.

“ The judgment of the Synod of the Reformed Belgic churches,” to which many Divines of note of other Reformed churches were admitted, “ on the articles controverted in the Belgic churches,” was drawn up in Latin, and read in the great church at Dort, in the year 1619 ; and a translation into English of this Judgment, with the Synod’s Rejection of Errors, was published in the same year.\* This translation having become scarce, or not being known to Mr. Scott, he published a new translation in 1818 ; from which, as being in more modern English, and, as far as I have compared it, unexceptionably faithful, I shall take the extracts necessary to exhibit the Synod’s decision on the point before us.

Art. 1 : “ As all men have sinned in Adam, and have become exposed to the curse and eternal death, God would have done no injustice to any one, if he had determined to leave the whole human race under sin and the curse, and to condemn them on account of sin ; according to the words of the Apostle, ‘ All the world is become guilty before God.’ (Rom. iii. 19.) ‘ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ (Verse 23.) And, ‘ The wages of sin is death.’ (Rom. vi. 23.)”

The Synod here assumes that all men, in consequence of Adam’s sin, have become exposed to the curse of “ eternal death ;” and they quote passages to prove it, which manifestly

prove nothing to the point. The two first speak of actual sin ; the third, of the wages or penalty of actual sin ; as the context of each will show. The very texts adduced show how totally at a loss the Synod was for anything like scriptural evidence of this strange doctrine ; which, however, as we have seen, would not, if true, help them through their difficulties, seeing it leaves the punishment of the reprobate for actual sin and for disbelief of the Gospel, still unaccounted for on every principle of justice.

Art. 4: "They who believe not the Gospel, on them the wrath of God remaineth ; but those who receive it, and embrace the Saviour Jesus with a true and living faith, are, through him, delivered from the wrath of God, and receive the gift of everlasting life."

To this there is nothing to object ; only it is to be observed, that those who are not elected to eternal life out of the common mass, are not, according to this article, merely left and passed by ; but are brought under an obligation of believing the Gospel, which, nevertheless, is no "good news" to them, and in which they have no interest at all ; and yet, in default of believing, "the wrath of God abideth upon them." Thus there is, in fact, no alternative for them. They cannot believe, or else it would follow that those reprobated might be saved ; and, therefore, "the wrath of God abideth upon them" for no fault of their own. This, however, the next article denies :—

Art. 5: "The cause or fault of this unbelief, as also of all other sins, is by no means in God ; but in man. But faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation by him, is the free gift of God. 'By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' (Eph. ii. 8.) In like manner, 'It is given to you to believe in Christ.' (Phil. i. 29.)"

These passages would be singular proofs that the fault of unbelief is in men themselves, did not the next article explain the connexion between them and the premises in the minds of the Synodists. A much more appropriate text, but a rather difficult one on their theory, would have been, "Ye have not, because ye ask not."

Art. 6: "That some, in time, have faith given them by God, and others have it not given, proceeds from his eternal decree; for 'known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.' (Acts xv. 18.) According to which decree, he gradually softens the hearts of the elect, however hard, and he bends them to believe; but the non-elect he leaves, in just judgment, to their own perversity and hardness. And here, especially, a deep discrimination, at the same time both merciful and just, a discrimination of men equally lost, opens itself to us; or that decree of election and reprobation which is revealed in the word of God; which as perverse, impure, and unstable persons do wrest to their own destruction, so it affords ineffable consolation to holy and pious souls."

To this article the Synod appends no Scripture proofs; which, if the doctrines it contains were, as the Synodists say, "revealed in the word of God," would not have been wanting. The passage which stands in the middle of the article could scarcely be intended as a proof, since it would equally apply to any other doctrine which does not shut out the prescience of God. The doctrine of the two articles just quoted will be seen by taking them together. The position laid down is, that the fault of not believing the Gospel is in man. The alleged proof of this is, that faith is the gift of God. But this only proves that the fault of not believing is in man, just as it allows that God, the giver of faith, is willing to give faith to those who have it not, and that they will not receive it. In no other way can it prove the faultiness of man; for to what end are we taught that faith is the gift of God, in order to prove the fault of not believing to be in man, if God will not bestow the gift, and if man cannot believe without such bestowment? This, however, is precisely what the Synod teaches. It argues, that faith is the gift of God; that it is only given to some, and that this proceeds from God's eternal decree. So that, by virtue of this decree, he gives faith to some, and withholds it from others, who are, thereupon, left without the power of believing; and for this act of God, therefore, and not for a fault of their own, they are punished



eternally. And yet the Synod calls this a “just judgment, affording ineffable consolation to holy souls,” and a “doctrine only rejected by the perverse and impure !”

As we have already quoted, and commented on, the seventh and eighth articles on election, we proceed to

Art. 10 : “Now the cause of this gratuitous election is the sole good pleasure of God ; not consisting in this, that he elected into the condition of salvation certain qualities or human actions, from all that were possible ; but in that, out of the common multitude of sinners, he took to himself certain persons as his peculiar property, according to the Scripture, ‘For the children being not born, neither having done any good or evil,’ &c., ‘it is said,’ (that is, to Rebecca,) ‘The elder shall serve the younger ; even as it is written, Jacob have I loved ; but Esau have I hated.’ (Rom. ix. 11—13.) ‘And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.’ (Acts xiii. 48.)”

Thus the ground of this election is resolved wholly into the “good pleasure of God,” (*est solum Dei beneplacitum*,) having no respect, as to its reason or condition, though it may have as to its end, “to any foreseen faith, obedience of faith, or any other good quality and disposition,” as it is expressed in the preceding article. Let us, then, see how the case stands with the reprobate :—

Art. 15 : “Moreover, holy Scripture doth illustrate and commend to us this eternal and free grace of our election, in this more especially, that it doth also testify all men not to be elected ; but that some are non-elect, or passed by in the eternal election of God ; whom, truly, God, from most free, just, irreprehensible, and immutable good pleasure, decreed to leave in the common misery into which they had, by their own fault, cast themselves, and not to bestow on them living faith, and the grace of conversion ; but having left them in their own ways, and under just judgment, at length, not only on account of their unbelief, but also of all their other sins, to condemn and eternally punish them for the manifestation of his own justice. And this is the decree of reprobation, which determines that God is in nowise the author of sin ; (which,

to be thought of, is blasphemy;) but a tremendous, irreprehensible, just judge and avenger.”

Thus we hear the Synodists confessing in the same breath in which they plausibly represent reprobation as a mere passing by and leaving men in the common misery, that the reprobate are punishable for their unbelief and other sins; and so this decree imports, therefore, much more than leaving men in the common misery. For this common misery can mean no more than the misery common to all mankind by the sin of Adam, into which his fall plunged the elect, as well as the reprobate; and to be left in it, must be understood of being left to the sole consequences of that offence. Now, were it even to be conceded that these consequences extend to personal and conscious eternal punishment, which has been disproved; yet, even then, their decree has a much more formidable aspect, terrible and repulsive as this alone would be. For we are expressly told, that God not only decreed to leave them in this misery, but not to bestow on them living faith, and the grace of conversion; and then to condemn and eternally punish them on account of their unbelief, which, by their own showing, these reprobates could not avoid; and for all their other sins, which they could not but commit, since it was decreed to deny to them the grace of conversion. Thus the case of the reprobate is deeply aggravated, beyond what it could have been if they had been merely left in the common misery; and the Synod and its followers have, therefore, the task of showing, how the punishing of men for what they never could avoid, and which it was expressly decreed they never should avoid, is a manifestation of the justice of Almighty God.

From the above extracts it will be seen how little reason Mr. Scott had to reproach Dr. Heylin with “bearing false witness against his neighbour,”\* on account of having given a summary of the eighteen articles of the Synod, on predestination, in the following words:—“That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men,

\* Scott's translation of the Articles of the Synod of Dort, page 120.

without any regard to their faith and obedience whatsoever; and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and appointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation, without any regard to their infidelity and impenitency." Whether Mr. Scott understood this controversy or not, Dr. Heylin shows, by this summary, that he neither misapprehended it, nor bore "false witness against his neighbour," in so stating it; for as to the stir made about his rendering *multitudo* "a very small number," this verbal inaccuracy affects not the merits of the doctrine; and neither the Synodists, nor any of their followers, ever allowed the elect to be a very great number. The number, less or more, alters not the doctrine. With respect to the elect, the Synod confesses, that the decree of election has no regard, as a cause, to faith and obedience foreseen in the persons so elected; and with respect to the reprobate, although it is not so explicit in asserting that the decree of reprobation has no regard to their infidelity and impenitency, the foregoing extracts cannot possibly be interpreted into any other meaning. For it is manifestly in vain for the Synodists to attempt, in the 15th article, to gloss over the doctrine, by saying that men "cast themselves into the common misery by their own fault," when they only mean that they were cast into it by Adam and by his fault. If they intended to ground their decree of reprobation on foresight of the personal offences of the reprobate, they would have said this in so many words; but the materials of which the Synod was composed forbade such a declaration; and they themselves, in the "Rejection of Errors," appended to their chapter *De Divinâ Predestinatione*, place in this list the errors of those who teach that God has not decreed, from his own mere just will, to leave any in the fall of Adam, and in the common state of sin and damnation, or to pass them by in the communication of grace necessary to faith and conversion; quoting, as a proof of this dogma, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," and giving no intimation that they understand this passage in any other sense than Calvin and his immediate followers have uniformly affixed to it. What Dr. Heylin has said is here, then, abun-



dantly established ; for if the decree of reprobation is to be referred to God's mere will, and if its operation is to leave the reprobate in the fall of Adam, and to pass them by in that communication of grace which is necessary to faith and conversion, the decree itself is that which prevents both penitence and faith, and stands upon some other ground than the personal infidelity and impenitency of the reprobate, and cannot have any regard to either, except as a part of its own dread consequences ; a view of the matter which the supralapsarians would readily admit. How their doctrine, so stated by themselves, could give the Synod any reason to complain, as they do in their conclusion, that they were slandered by their enemies when they were charged with teaching, that God, by the bare and mere determination of his will, without any respect of the sin of any man, predestinated and created the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, will not be very obvious ; or why they should startle at the same doctrine in one dress which they themselves have but clothed in another. The fact is, that the divisions in the Synod obliged the leading members, who were chiefly stout supralapsarians, to qualify their doctrine somewhat in words, whilst substantially it remained the same ; but what they lost by giving up a few words in one place, they secured by retaining them in another, or by resorting to subtilties not obvious to the commonalty. Of this subtilty, the apparent disclaimer just quoted is in proof. When they seem to deny that God reprobates without any respect to the sin of any man, they may mean that he had respect to the sin of Adam, or to sin in Adam ; for they do not deny that they reject personal sin as a ground of reprobation. Even when they appear to allow that God had, in reprobation, respect to the corruption of human nature, or even to personal transgression, they never confess that God had respect to sin, in either sense, as the impulsive or meritorious cause of reprobation. But the greatest subtilty remains behind ; for the Synod says nothing, in this complaint and apparent rejection of the doctrine charged upon them by their adversaries, but what all the supralapsarian Divines would say. These, as we have seen,

make a distinction between the two parts of the decree of reprobation,—preterition and predamnation, the latter of which must always have respect to actual sin ; and hence arises their distinction between destruction and damnation. For they say, it is one thing to predestinate and create to damnation, and another to predestinate and create to destruction. Damnation, being the sentence of a judge, must be passed in consideration of sin ; but destruction may be the act of a sovereign, and so inflicted by right of dominion.\* The Synod would have disallowed something substantial, had they denied that God created any man to destruction, without respect to sin ; and were safe enough in allowing that he has created none, without respect to sin, unto damnation. But among the errors on predestination which they formally reject, and which they place under nine distinct heads, thus attempting to guard the pure and orthodox doctrine as to this point on the right hand and on the left, they are careful not to condemn the supralapsarian doctrine, or to place even its highest branches among the doctrines disavowed.

The doctrine of the Church of Scotland on these topics is expressed in the answers to the 12th and 13th questions of its large Catechism : “ God’s decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will ; whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.” “ God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory, and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life and the means thereof ; and also, according to his sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of his own will, (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth

\* *Non solent enim supralapsarii dicere Deum quosdam ad æternam damnationem creasse et prædestinasse ; eo quod damnatio actum judiciale designet, ac proinde peccati meritum præsupponat ; sed malunt uti voce exitii, ad quod Deus, tanquam absolutus Dominus, jus habeat creandi et destinandi quoscunque voluerit.*—CURCELLÆUS *De Jure Dei*, §c., cap. x. See also Bishop Womack’s *Calvinists’ Cabinet*, &c., page 394

favour as he pleaseth,) hath passed by and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice."

In this general view there appears a strict conformity to the opinions of Calvin, as before given. All things are the subjects of decree and pre-ordination; election and reprobation are grounded upon the mere will of God; election is the choosing men, not only to salvation, but to the means of salvation, from which the reprobates are therefore excluded, as passed by, and fore-ordained to wrath; and yet, though the means of salvation are never put within their reach, this wrath is inflicted upon them for their sin, and to the praise of God's justice! The Church of Scotland adopts, also, the notion that decrees of election and reprobation extend to angels as well as men; a pretty certain proof that the framers of this Catechism were not sublapsarians, for, as to angels, there could be no election out of a "common misery;" and with Calvin, therefore, they choose to refer the whole to the arbitrary pleasure and will of God:—"The angels who stood in their integrity, Paul calls 'elect if their constancy rested on the divine pleasure, the defection of others argues their having been forsaken; (*derelictos*;) fact, for which no other cause can be assigned than the reprobation hidden in the secret counsel of God."

The ancient church of the Vaudois, in the valleys of Piedmont, have a Confession of Faith, bearing date A.D. 1120, and which, probably, transmits the opinions of much more ancient times. The only Article which bears upon the extent of the death of Christ is drawn up, as might be expected in an age of the church when it was received, as a matter almost entirely undisputed, that Christ died for the salvation of the whole world: Art. 8: "Christ is our life, truth, peace, and righteousness, also our Pastor, Advocate, Sacrifice, and Priest, who died for the salvation of all those that believe, and is risen again for our justification."

The Confession of Faith, published by the churches of Piedmont in 1655, bears a different character. In the year 1630, a plague, which was introduced from France into these valleys, swept off all the Ministers but two; and with them ended the



race of their ancient Barbes, or Pastors.\* The Vaudois were then under the necessity of applying to the Reformed churches of France and Geneva for a supply of Ministers; and with them came in the doctrine of Calvin in an authorized form. It was thus embodied in the Confession of 1655, Art. 11: "God saves from corruption and condemnation those whom he has chosen from the foundation of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness, that he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Jesus Christ his Son, passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of his free will and justice." The last clause is expressed in the very words of Calvin.

The Twelfth Article in the Confession of the French churches, 1558, is, in substance, Calvinistic, though brief and guarded in expression: "We believe, that, out of this general corruption and condemnation in which all men are plunged, God doth deliver them whom he hath, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, chosen of his mere goodness and mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, without any consideration of their works, leaving the rest in their sins and damnable estate, that he may show forth in them his justice, as, in the elect, he doth most illustriously declare the riches of his mercy. For one is not better than another, until such time as God doth make the difference, according to his unchangeable purpose which he hath determined in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world."† This Confession was drawn up by Calvin himself, though not in language so strong as he usually employs, which, perhaps, indicates that the majority of the French Pastors were inclined to the sublapsarian theory, and did not, in every point, coincide with their great master.

The Westminster Confession gives the sentiments both of the English Presbyterian churches, and the Church of Scotland.‡ The third chapter treats of predestination:—

\* See Historical Defence, &c., of the Waldenses, by Sims.

† Quick's *Synodicon in Galliâ Reformatâ*.

‡ The title of it is, "The Confession of Faith agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with the Assistance of Commissioners from the

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot either be increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

Here we have no attempts at qualification, after the example of the Synod of Dort; but the whole is conformed to the higher and most unmitigated parts of the Institutes of Calvin. By the side of the Presbyterian Confession, the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England must appear exceedingly moderate; and as to Calvinistic predestination, to say the least, equivocal. It never gave satisfaction to the followers of

Church of Scotland.” The date of the ordinance for convening this Assembly is 1643. The Confession was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647.

Calvin, who had put his stronger impress upon the Augustinism which floated in the minds of many of the Divines of the Reformation, who generally, as appears from the earliest Protestant Confessions and Catechisms,\* thought fit to recommend that either these points should not be touched at all, or so to speak of them as to admit great latitude of interpretation, and that, probably, in charitable respect to the varying opinions of the theologians and churches of the day. It is of the perfected form of Calvinism that Arminius speaks, when he says, "It neither agrees nor corresponds with the Harmony of those Confessions which were published together in one volume at Geneva, in the name of the Reformed and Protestant churches. If that Harmony of Confessions be faithfully consulted, it will appear that many of them do not speak in the same manner concerning predestination; that some of them only incidentally mention it, and that they evidently never once touch upon those heads of the doctrine which are now in great repute, and particularly urged in the preceding scheme of predestination. The Confessions of Bohemia, England, and Wirtemberg, and the first Helvetian Confession, and that of the four cities of Strasburgh, Constance, Memingen, and Lindau, make no mention of this predestination: Those of Basle and Saxony only take a very cursory notice of it in three words. The Augstuan Confession speaks of it in such a manner as to induce the Genevan editors to think that some annotation was necessary on their part to give us a previous warning. The last of the Helvetian Confessions, to which a great portion of the Reformed churches have expressed their assent, likewise speaks of it in such a strain as makes me very desirous to see what method can possibly be adopted to give it any accordance with that doctrine of predestination which I

\* The Augsburg Confession says, *Non est hic opus disputationibus de prædestinatione et similibus. Nam promissio est universalis et nihil detrahit operibus, sed exsuscitat ad fidem et vere bona opera.* Art. 20. And the Saxon Confession is equally indifferent to the subject: *Non addimus hic quæstiones de prædestinatione seu de electione; sed deducimus omnes lectores ad verbum Dei, et jubemus ut voluntatem Dei verbo ipsius discant sicut æternus Pater expressâ voce præcipit, Hunc audite.*—Art. *De Remiss. Pecc.*



have stated. Without the least contention or cavilling, it may be very properly made a subject of doubt, whether this doctrine agrees with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.”\*

I have given these extracts to show that nothing in the preceding discussion has been assumed as Calvinism, but what is to be found in the writings of the founder of the system, and in the Confessions and Creeds of churches which professedly admitted his doctrine.

With respect to modifications of this system, the sublapsarian theory has been already considered, and shown to be substantially the same as the system which it professes to mitigate and improve. We may now adduce another modified theory; but shall, upon examination, find it but little, if at all, removed out of the reach of those objections which have been stated to the various shades of the predestinating scheme already noticed.

That scheme is, in England, usually called “Baxterianism,” from the celebrated Baxter, who advocated it in his *Treatise of Universal Redemption*, and in his *Methodus Theologiæ*. He was, however, in this theory but the disciple of certain Divines of the French Protestant church, whose opinions created many dissensions abroad, and produced so much warmth of opposition from the Calvinistic party, that they were obliged first to engage in the hopeless attempt of softening down the harsher aspects of the doctrine of Calvin and the Synod of Dort, in order to keep themselves in countenance; then to attack the Arminians with asperity, in order to purge themselves of the suspicion of entire heterodoxy in a Calvinistic church; and, finally, to withdraw from the contest. The Calvinism of the Church of France was, however, much mitigated in subsequent times by the influence of the writings of these theologians; a result which also has followed in England from the labours of Baxter, who, though he formed no separate school, has had numerous followers in the Calvinistic churches of this country. The real author of the scheme,

\* Nichols's Translation of the Works of Arminius, vol. i., p. 557.

at least in a systematized form, was Camero, who taught divinity at Saumur; and it was unfolded and defended by his disciple Amyraldus, to whom Curcellæus replied in the work from which I have above made some quotations. Baxter says, in his preface to his *Saints' Rest*, "The middle way which Camero, Crocius, Martinius, Amyraldus, Davenant, with all the Divines of Britain and Bremen in the Synod of Dort, go, I think is nearest the truth of any that I know who have written on these points." \*

This system he laboured powerfully to defend; and his works on this subject, although his system is often spoken of, being but little known to the general reader, the following exhibition of this scheme, from his work entitled *Universal Redemption*, may be acceptable. It makes great concessions to that view of the scriptural doctrine which we have attempted to establish; but, for want of going another step, it is, perhaps, the most inconsistent theory to which the varied attempts to modify Calvinism have given rise. Baxter first differs from the majority of Calvinists, though not from all, in his statement of the doctrine of satisfaction:—

"Christ's sufferings were not a fulfilling of the law's threatening; (though he bore its curse materially;) but a satisfaction for our not fulfilling the precept, and to prevent God's fulfilling the threatening on us.

"Christ paid not, therefore, the *idem*, but the *tantundem*, or *æquivalens*; not the very debt which we owed and the law required, but the value: (Else it were not strictly satisfaction, which is *redditio æquivalentis*;) And (it being improperly called 'the paying of a debt,' but properly 'a suffering for the guilty') the *idem* is nothing but *supplicium delinquentis*. In criminals, *dum alius solvet simul aliud solvitur*. The law knoweth no vicarious *pœnæ*; though the law-maker may admit it, as he is above law; else there were no place for

\* Of Camero or Cameron, Amyraldus, Courcelles, and the controversy in which they were engaged, see an interesting account in Nichols's *Calvinism and Arminianism Compared*, vol i., Appendix C; a work of elaborate research, and abounding with the most curious information as to the opinions and history of those times.

pardon, if the proper debt be paid and the law not relaxed, but fulfilled.

“ Christ did neither obey nor suffer in any man’s stead, by a strict, proper representation of his person in point of law ; so as that the law should take it, as done or suffered by the party himself. But only as a third person, as a Mediator, he voluntarily bore what else the sinner should have borne.

“ To assert the contrary (especially as to particular persons considered in actual sin) is to overthrow all Scripture theology, and to introduce all Antinomianism ; to overthrow all possibility of pardon, and assert justification before we sinned or were born, and to make ourselves to have satisfied God.

“ Therefore, we must not say that Christ died *nostro loco*, so as to personate us, or represent our persons, in law sense ; but only to bear what else we must have borne.”\*

This system explicitly asserts, that Christ made a satisfaction by his death equally for the sins of every man ; and thus Baxter essentially differs both from the rigid Calvinists, and also from the sublapsarians, who, though they may allow that the reprobate derive some benefits from Christ’s death, so that there is a vague sense in which he may be said to have died for all men, yet they, of course, deny to such the benefit of Christ’s satisfaction or atonement, which Baxter contends for :—

“ Neither the law, whose curse Christ bore, nor God, as the Legislator to be satisfied, did distinguish between men as elect and reprobate, or as believers and unbelievers, *de præsenti vel de futuro* ; and to impose upon Christ, or require from him satisfaction for the sins of one sort more than of another, but for mankind in general.

“ God the Father, and Christ the Mediator, now dealeth with no man upon the mere rigorous terms of the first law ; (Obey perfectly and live, else thou shalt die ;) but giveth to all much mercy, which, according to the tenor of that violated law, they could not receive, and calleth them to repentance,



in order to their receiving further mercy offered them. And, accordingly, he will not judge any at last according to the mere law of works, but as they have obeyed or not obeyed his conditions or terms of grace.

“It was not the sins of the elect only, but of all mankind fallen, which lay upon Christ satisfying. And to assert the contrary, injuriously diminisheth the honour of his sufferings ; and hath other desperate ill consequences.” \*

The benefits derived to all men equally, from the satisfaction of Christ, he thus states :—

“All mankind, immediately upon Christ’s satisfaction, are redeemed and delivered from that legal necessity of perishing which they were under, (not by remitting sin or punishment directly to them, but by giving up God’s *jus puniendi* into the hands of the Redeemer ; nor by giving any right directly to them, but *per meram resultantiam* this happy change is made for them in their relation, upon the said remitting of God’s right and advantage of justice against them,) and they are given up to the Redeemer as their Owner and Ruler, to be dealt with upon terms of mercy which have a tendency to their recovery.

“God the Father and Christ the Mediator hath freely, without any prerequisite condition on man’s part, enacted a law of grace of universal extent, in regard of its tenor, by which he giveth, as a deed of gift, Christ himself, with all his following benefits which he bestoweth ; (as Benefactor and Legislator ;) and this to all alike, without excluding any ; upon condition they believe, and accept the offer.

“By this law, testament, or covenant, all men are conditionally pardoned, justified, and reconciled to God already, and no man absolutely ; nor doth it make a difference, nor take notice of any till men’s performance or non-performance of the condition makes a difference.

“In the new law Christ hath truly given himself with a conditional pardon, justification, and conditional right to salvation, to all men in the world, without exception.” †

\* Universal Redemption, pp. 36, 37, and 50.

† Ibid., p. 36, &c.

On the case of the Heathen :—

“ Though God hath been pleased less clearly to acquaint us on what terms he dealeth with those that hear not of Christ, yet it being most clear and certain, that he dealeth with them on terms of grace, and not on the terms of the rigorous law of works, this general may evince them to be the Mediator’s subjects, and redeemed.

“ Though it be very difficult, and not very necessary, to know what is the condition prescribed to them that hear not of Christ, or on what terms Christ will judge them ; yet, to me it seems to be the covenant made with Adam, Gen. iii. 15, which they are under, requiring their taking God to be their only God and Redeemer, and to expecting mercy from him and loving him above all, as their end and chief good ; and repenting of sin, and sincere obedience, according to the laws promulgate to them, to lead them further.

“ All those that have not heard of Christ, have yet much mercy which they receive from him, and is the fruit of his death ; according to the well or ill using whereof it seems possible that God will judge them.

“ It is a course to blind, and not to inform men, to lay the main stress in the doctrine of redemption upon our uncertain conclusions of God’s dealing with such as never heard of Christ, seeing all proof is *per notiora* ; and we must reduce points uncertain to the certain, and not the certain to the uncertain, in our trial.”\*

In arguments drawn from the consequences which follow the denial of “ universal satisfaction,” Baxter is particularly terse and conclusive :—

“ The doctrine which denieth universal satisfaction hath all these inconveniences and absurd consequents following ; therefore, it is not of God, nor true.

“ It either denieth the universal promise or conditional gift of pardon and life to all men if they will believe, and then it overturneth the substance of Christ’s law and Gospel promise ; or else it maketh God to give conditionally to all men a pardon

\* Universal Redemption, pp. 37, 38, and 54.

and salvation which Christ never purchased, and without his dying for men.

“It maketh God either not to offer the effects of Christ’s satisfaction (pardon and life) to all, but only to the elect ; or else to offer that which is not, and which he cannot give.

“It denieth the direct object of faith. and of God’s offer, that is, *Christum qui satisfecit*, a Christ that hath satisfied.

“It either denieth the non-elect’s deliverance from that flat necessity of perishing, which came on man for sinning against the first law, by its remediless, unsuspended obligation ; (and so neither Christ, Gospel, or mercy, had ever any nature of a remedy to them, nor any more done towards their deliverance than towards the deliverance of the devils ;) or else it maketh this deliverance and remedy to be without satisfaction by Christ for them.

“It either denieth that God commandeth all to believe ; (but only the elect ;) or else maketh God to assign them a deceiving object for their faith, commanding them to believe in that which never was, and to trust in that which would deceive them if they did trust it.

“It maketh God either to have appointed and commanded the non-elect to use no means at all for their recovery and salvation, or else to have appointed them means which are all utterly useless and insufficient, for want of a prerequisite cause without them ; yea, which imply a contradiction.

“It maketh the true and righteous God to make promises of pardon and salvation to all men on condition of believing, which he neither would nor could perform, (for want of such satisfaction to his justice,) if they did believe.

“It denieth the true sufficiency of Christ’s death for the pardoning and saving of all men, if they did believe.

“It makes the cause of men’s damnation to be principally for want of an expiatory sacrifice and of a Saviour, and not of believing.

“It leaveth all the world, elect as well as others, without any ground and object for the first justifying faith, and in an utter uncertainty whether they may believe to justification, or not.



“ It denieth the most necessary humbling aggravation of men’s sins, so that neither the Minister can tell wicked men that they have sinned against Him that bought them, nor can any wicked man so excuse himself; no, nor any man that doth not know himself to be elect; they cannot say, ‘ My sins put Christ to death, and were the cause of his sufferings; ’ nay, a Minister cannot tell any man in the world, certainly, (their sins put Christ to death,) because he is not certain who is elect or sincere in the faith.

“ It subverteth Christ’s new dominion and government of the world, and his general legislation and judgment according to his law, which is now founded in his title of redemption, as the first dominion and government was on the title of creation.

“ It maketh all the benefits that the non-elect receive, whether spiritual or corporal; and so even the relaxation of the curse of the law, (without which relaxation no man could have such mercies,) to befall men without the satisfaction of Christ; and so either makes satisfaction, as to all those mercies, needless, or else must find another satisfier.

“ It maketh the law of grace to contain far harder terms than the law of works did in its utmost rigour.

“ It maketh the law of Moses either to bind all the non-elect still to all ceremonies and bondage-ordinances, (and so sets up Judaism,) or else to be abrogated and taken down, and men delivered from it, without Christ suffering for them.

“ It destroys almost the whole work of the ministry, disabling Ministers either to humble men by the chiefest aggravations of their sins, and to convince them of ingratitude and unkind dealing with Christ, or to show them any hopes to draw them to repentance, or any love and mercy tending to salvation to melt and win them to the love of Christ; or any sufficient object for their faith and affiance, or any means to be used for pardon or salvation, or any promise to encourage them to come in, or any threatening to deter them.

“ It makes God and the Redeemer to have done no more for the remedying of the misery of most of fallen mankind than for

the devils, nor to have put them into any more possibility of pardon or salvation.

“Nay, it makes God to have dealt far hardlier with most men than with the devils; making them a law which requireth their believing in one that never died for them, and taking him for their Redeemer that never redeemed them, and that on the mere foresight that they would not believe it, or decree that they should not; and so to create by that law a necessity of their far sorer punishment, without procuring them any possibility of avoiding it.

“It makes the Gospel of its own nature to be the greatest plague and judgment to most of men that receive it, that ever God sendeth to men on earth, by binding them over to a greater punishment, and aggravating their sin, without giving them any possibility of remedy.

“It maketh the case of all the world, except the elect, as deplorable, remediless, and hopeless, as the case of the damned; and so denieth them to have any day of grace, visitation, or salvation, or any price for happiness put into their hands.

“It maketh Christ to condemn men to hell-fire for not receiving him for their Redeemer that never redeemed them, and for not resting on him for salvation by his blood, which was never shed for them, and for not repenting unto life, when they had no hope of mercy, and faith and repentance could not have saved them.

“It putteth sufficient excuses into the mouths of the condemned.

“It maketh the torments of conscience in hell to be none at all, and teacheth the damned to put away all their sorrows and self-accusations.

“It denieth all the privative part of those torments which men are obliged to suffer by the obligation of Christ’s law, and so maketh hell either no hell at all, or next to none.

“And I shall anon show how it leads to infidelity and other sins; and, after this, what face of religion is left unsubverted? Not that I charge those that deny universal satisfaction with holding all these abominations; but their doctrine

of introducing them by necessary consequences: It is the opinion, and not the men, that I accuse."

A thorough Arminian could say nothing stronger than what is asserted in several of the above quotations; and, perhaps, what might not be borne from him, may call attention from Baxter: And happy would it be if every advocate of Calvin's reprobation would give these consequents a candid consideration.

The peculiarity of Baxter's scheme will be seen from the following further extracts; and, after all, it singularly leaves itself open to almost all the objections which he so powerfully urges against Calvinism itself:—

"Though Christ died equally for all men, in the aforesaid law sense, as he satisfied the offended Legislator, and as giving himself to all alike in the conditional covenant; yet he never properly intended or purposed the actual justifying and saving of all, nor of any but those that come to be justified and saved; he did not, therefore, die for all, nor for any that perish, with a decree or resolution to save them, much less did he die for all alike, as to this intent.

"Christ hath given faith to none by his law or testament, though he hath revealed, that to some he will, as benefactor and *Dominus absolutus*, give that grace which shall infallibly produce it; and God hath given some to Christ that he might prevail with them accordingly; yet this is no giving it to the person, nor hath he in himself ever the more title to it, nor can any lay claim to it as their due.

"It belongeth not to Christ as Satisfier, nor yet as Legislator, to make wicked refusers to become willing, and receive him and the benefits which he offers; therefore he may do all for them that is fore-expressed, though he cure not their unbelief.

"Faith is a fruit of the death of Christ, (and so is all the good which we do enjoy,) but not directly, as it is satisfaction to justice; but only remotely, as it proceedeth from that *jus dominii* which Christ has received to send the Spirit in what measure and to whom he will, and to succeed it accord-



ingly ; and as it is necessary to the attainment of the further ends of his death in the certain gathering and saving of the elect." \*

Thus, then, the whole theory comes to this, that, although a conditional salvation has been purchased by Christ for all men, and is offered to them, and all legal difficulties are removed out of the way of their pardon as sinners by the atonement, yet Christ hath not purchased for any man the gift of faith, or the power of performing the condition of salvation required ; but gives this to some, and does not give 't to others, by virtue of that absolute dominion over men which he has purchased for himself: So that, in fact, the old scheme of election and reprobation still comes in, only with this difference, that the Calvinists refer that decree to the sovereignty of the Father, Baxter to the sovereignty of the Son ; one makes the decree of reprobation to issue from the Creator and Judge, the other, (which is indeed the more repulsive view,) from the Redeemer himself, who has purchased even those to whom he denies the gift of faith with his own most precious blood. This is plain from the following quotation :—

“ God did not give Christ faith for his blood shed in exchange ; the thing that God was to give the Son for his satisfaction, was, dominion and rule of the redeemed creature, and power therein to use what means he saw fit for the bringing in of souls to himself, even to send forth so much of his word and Spirit as he pleased ; both the Father and Son resolving, from eternity, to prevail infallibly with all the elect ; but never did Christ desire at his Father's hands, that all whom he satisfied for should be infallibly and irresistibly brought to believe, nor did God ever grant or promise any such thing. Jesus Christ, as a ransom, died for all, and as *Rector per leges*, or Legislator, he hath conveyed the fruits of his death to all ; that is, those fruits which it appertained to him as Legislator to convey, which is right to what his new law or covenant doth promise ; but those mercies

\* Universal Redemption, p. 63, &c.

which he gives as *Dominus absolutus*, arbitrarily besides or above his engagement, he neither gives nor ever intended to give to all that he died for.”\*

The only quibble which prevents the real aspect of this scheme from being at first seen, is, that Baxter, and the Divines of this school, give to the elect irresistible effectual grace; but contend, that others have sufficient grace. This kind of grace is called, aptly enough, by Baxter himself, “sufficient ineffectual grace;” and that it is worthy the appellation his own account of it will show:—

“I say it again, confidently, all men that perish (who have the use of reason) do perish directly for rejecting sufficient recovering grace. By grace, I mean mercy contrary to merit; by recovering, I mean such as tendeth in its own nature toward their recovery, and leadeth or helpeth them thereto. By sufficient, I mean, not sufficient directly to save them; (for such none of the elect have till they are saved;) nor yet sufficient to give them faith or cause them savingly to believe. But it is sufficient to bring them nearer Christ than they are, though not to put them into immediate possession of Christ by union with him, as faith would do. It is an easy truth, that all men naturally are far from Christ, and that some, by custom in sinning, for want of informing and restraining means, are much further from him than others, (as the Heathens are,) and that it is not God’s usual way (nor to be expected) to bring these men to Christ at once, by one act, or without any preparation or first bringing them nearer to him. It is a similitude used by some that oppose what I now say: Suppose a man in a lower room should go no more steps than he in the middle room, he must go many steps before he came to be as near you as the other is. Now, suppose you offer to take them by the hand when they come to the upper stairs, and give them some other sufficient help to come up the lower steps; if these men will not use the help given them to ascend the first steps, (though entreated,) who can be blamed but themselves if they come not to the top?

It is not your fault, but theirs, that they have not your hand to lift them up at the last step. So is our present case. Worldlings, and sensual, ignorant sinners, have many steps to ascend before they come to justifying faith; and Heathens have many steps before they come as far as ungodly Christians, as might easily be manifested by enumeration of several necessary particulars. Now, if these will not use that sufficient help that Christ gives them to come the first, or second, or third step, who is it long of that they have not faith?" \*

But we have no reason to conclude, from this system, that if they took the steps required, it would bring them nearer to Christ than they are, or, at least, bring them up to saving faith, which is the great point, since Mr. Baxter's own doctrine is, that Christ never properly intended or purposed the actual justifying and saving of all, and did not, therefore, die for all, nor for any that perish, with a design or resolution to save them; much less did he die for all as to this intent. Those, then, for whom Christ died, not with intent to give saving faith, cannot be saved; yet we are told, that to these sufficient grace is given, to take a step or two which would bring them nearer to Christ. Suppose such persons, then, to take these steps, yet, as Christ died not for them, with intent to give them saving faith, without this intent they cannot have saving faith, since it is not a part of Christ's purchase, but his arbitrary gift. The truth then is, that their salvation is as impossible as that of the reprobates under the supralapsarian scheme, and the reason of their doom is no act of their own, but an act of Christ himself, who, as absolute Lord, denies that to them which is necessary to their salvation.

It is, however, but fair that Mr. Baxter should himself answer this objection:—

“OBJECTION.—Then, they that come not the first step are excusable; for, if they had come to the step next believing, they had no assurance that Christ would have given them faith.



“ANSWER.—No such matter; for though they had no assurance, they had both God’s command to seek more grace, and sufficient encouragement thereto; they had such as Mr. Cotton calls ‘half-promises,’ that is, a discovery of a possibility, and high degree of probability, of obtaining; as Peter to Simon, ‘Pray, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven.’ They may think God will not appoint men vain means, and he hath appointed some means to all men to get more grace, and bring them nearer Christ than they are. Yea, no man can name that man since the world was made, that did his best in the use of these means, and lost his labour. So that if all men have not faith, it is their own fault; not only as originally sinners, but as rejecting sufficient grace to have brought them nearer Christ than they were; for which it is that they justly perish, as is more fully opened in the dispute of sufficient grace.”

One argument from Scripture demolishes this whole scheme. Mr. Baxter makes the condemnation of men to rest upon their not coming nearer to Christ than they are in their natural state; but the Scripture places their guilt in not fully “coming to him;” or, in other words, in their not believing in Christ to salvation, since it has made faith their duty, and has connected salvation with faith. That they must take previous steps, such as consideration and repentance, is true, and that they are guilty for not taking them; but then their guilt arises from their rejection of a strength and grace to consider and repent which is imparted to them, in order to lead them, through this process, to saving faith itself; and they are condemned for not having this faith, because not only the preparatory steps, but the faith itself is put within their reach, or they could not be condemned for unbelief. If Baxter really meant that any steps which these non-elect persons could take would actually put them into possession of saving faith, he would have said so in so many plain words; and then between him and the Arminians there would have been no difference, so far as they who perish are concerned. But coming nearer to Christ, and nearer to saving faith, are with him quite distinct. His concern was, not to show how the non-elect might

be saved, but how they might with some plausibility be damned.

“What then,” says Dr. Womack, “is the universal redemption you or they speak of? Doth it consist in the ablation of the curse or pain, the impetration of grace and righteousness, and the collation of life and glory? Man’s misery consists but of two parts, sin and punishment. Doth your universal redemption make provision to free the non-elect from both, or from either of these? from the wrath to come, the damnation of hell, or from iniquity and their vain conversation? Indeed, in your Assize Sermons, you did very seasonably preach up Christ to be a Lord Chief Justice to judge the reprobate; but I cannot find that ever you declare him to be their Lord Keeper, or their Lord Treasurer, to communicate his saving grace for their conversion, or to secure them against the assaults and rage of their ghostly enemy. These last offices you suppose him to bear in favour of the elect only, so that your universal redemption holds a very fair correspondence with your sufficient grace, (as to the non-elect,)—there is not one single person sanctified by this, or saved by that.”\*

The remark of Curcellæus on the same system as it was delivered by Amyraldus, is conclusive:—

“Besides, since faith is necessary, in order to make us partakers of the benefits which are procured by the death of Christ, and since no one can obtain it by his natural powers, (for it is imparted through a special gift, from which God, by an absolute decree, has excluded the greatest portion of mankind,) of what avail is it that Christ has died for those to whom faith is denied? Does not the affair revert to the same point, as if he had never entertained an intention of redeeming them?”†

This cannot consistently be denied. Mr. Baxter, indeed, says, that “none can name the man, since the world was made, that did his best in the use of the means to obtain more grace, and lost his labour.” So we believe; but this helps not

\* Calvinists’ Cabinet Unlocked.

† *De Jure Dei in Creaturas.*

Mr. Baxter. One of his main principles is, that there is a class of men to whom Christ has resolved to give saving faith; to the rest he has resolved not to give it. The man, then, who seeks more than common grace, and obtains saving grace, is either in the class to whom Christ has resolved, by right of dominion, to give saving grace, or he is not. If the former, then he is one of the elect, and so the instance given proves nothing as to the case of the non-elect; but, if he be of the latter class, then one of those to whom Christ never resolved to give saving grace, by some means obtains it,—how, it will be difficult to say. In fact, it was never allowed by Mr. Baxter or his followers, that any but those whom he calls “the elect” would be saved.

The remarks of a Calvinist upon the “middle scheme” of the French Divines, the same in substance as that which was afterwards advocated by Baxter, may properly close our remarks :—

“ This mitigated view of the doctrine of predestination has only one defect, but it is a capital one. It represents God as desiring a thing (that is, salvation and happiness) for all, which, in order to its attainment, requires a degree of his assistance and succour, which he refuseth to many. This rendered grace and redemption universal only in words, but partial in reality; and, therefore, did not at all mend the matter. The supralapsarians were consistent with themselves; but their doctrine was harsh and terrible, and was founded on the most unworthy notions of the supreme Being; and, on the other hand, the system of Amyraut was full of inconsistencies; nay, even the sublapsarian doctrine has its difficulties, and rather palliates than removes the horrors of supralapsarianism. What, then, is to be done? From what quarter shall the candid and well-disposed Christian receive that solid satisfaction and wise direction which neither of these systems is adapted to administer? These he will receive by turning his dazzled and feeble eye from the secret decrees of God, which were neither designed to be rules of action nor sources of comfort to mortals here below; and, by fixing his view upon the mercy of God, as it is manifested through Christ, the pure laws and



sublime promises of his Gospel, and the equity of his present government and future tribunal."\*

The theory to which the name of Baxter has given some weight in this country, has been introduced more at length, because with it stands or falls every system of moderated or modified Calvinism, which, by more modern writers, has been advocated. The scheme of Dr. Williams, of Rotherham, is little beside the old theory of supralapsarian reprobation, in its twofold enunciation of preterition, by which God refuses help to a creature that cannot stand without help, and his consequent damnation for the crimes committed in consequence of this withholding of supernatural aid. The dress is altered, and the system has a dash of Cameronism, but it is in substance the same. All other mitigated schemes rest on two principles,—the sufficiency of the atonement for all mankind, and the sufficiency of grace to those who believe not. For the first, it is enough to say, that the Synod of Dort and the higher Calvinistic school will agree with them upon this point, and so nothing is gained; for the second, that the sufficiency of grace in these schemes is always understood in Baxter's sense, and is mere verbiage. It is not "the grace of God which bringeth salvation;" for no man is actually saved without something more than what this "sufficient grace" provides. That which is contended for is, in fact, not a sufficiency of grace in order to salvation; but, in order to justify the condemnation which inevitably follows. For this alone the struggle is made, but without success. The main characteristic of all these theories, from the first to the last, from the highest to the lowest, is, that a part of mankind are shut out from the mercies of God, on some ground irrespective of their refusal of a sincere offer to them of salvation through Christ, made with a communicated power of embracing it. Some power they allow to the reprobate, as natural power, and degrees of superadded moral power; but in no case the power to believe unto salvation; and thus, as one well observes, "when they have cut some fair trenches, as if they would bring the water of life unto the

\* Maclaine's Notes on Mosheim's History.

dwellings of the reprobate, on a sudden they open a sluice which carries it off again." The whole labour of these theories is to find out some decent pretext for the infliction of punishment on them that perish, independent of the only reason given by Scripture, their rejection of a mercy free for all.

Having exhibited the Calvinistic system on its own authorities, it may be naturally asked, From what mode or bias of thinking a scheme could arise so much at variance with the Scriptures, and with all received principles of just and benevolent administration among men ; properties of government which must be found more perfectly in the government of God by reason of the perfection of its Author, than in any other ? That it had its source in a course of induction from the sacred Scriptures, though erroneous, is not probable ; for, if it had been left to that test, it is pretty certain that it would not have maintained itself. It appears rather to have arisen from metaphysical hypotheses and school subtleties, to which the sense of Scripture has been accommodated, often very violently ; and by subtleties of this kind, it has, at all times, been chiefly supported.

It has, for instance, been assumed by the advocates of this theological theory, that all things which come to pass have been fixed by eternal decrees, and that as many men actually perish, it must, therefore, have been decreed that they should perish ; and, consistently with such a scheme, it became necessary to exclude a part of the human race from all share in the benefits of Christ's redemption. The argument employed to confirm the premises is, " that it is agreeable to reason and to the analogy of nature, that God should conduct all things according to a deliberate and fixed plan, independent of his creatures, rather than that he should be influenced, even in his purposes, by the foresight of their capricious conduct."\* " It is not easy to reconcile the immutability and efficacy of the divine counsel which enters into our conceptions of the First Cause, with a purpose to save all, suspended upon a condition

\* Dr. Rankin's Institutes.

which is not fulfilled with regard to many.”\* This has, indeed, all along been the main stress of the argument for absolute decrees, that a conditional decree reflects dishonour upon the divine attributes, “by leaving God, as it were, in suspense, and waiting to see what men will do, before he passes a firm and irrevocable decree;” which, as they say, seems to imply want of power and prescience in God, and to be inconsistent with other of his divine perfections. They especially think, that this is irreconcilable with the immutability of God; and that to subject his decrees to the changes of a countless number of mutable beings, must render him the most mutable being in the universe.

The whole of this objection, however, seems to involve a *petitio principii*. It is taken for granted, either that the decrees of God are absolute appointments from eternity,—and then any change of his decrees, dependent upon the acts of creatures, would be a contradiction,—or else, that the acts of creatures being free, it follows, that God had from eternity no plan, and conducts his own government only as circumstances may arise. But, that either the decrees of God are fixed and absolute, or, that God can have no plan of government if that be denied, is the very alternative to be proved, the matter which is in debate. It becomes necessary, therefore, in order to ascertain the truth, to fix the sense of the favourite term “decrees;” and for this we have no sound guide but the Holy Scriptures, which, as to what relates to man’s salvation, at least, contain the only exposition of the purposes of God.

The term “decree” is nowhere in Scripture used in the sense in which it is taken in the theology of the Calvinists. It is properly a legislative or judicial term, importing the solemn decision of a court, and was adopted into that system, probably, because of the absolute meaning it conveys; which quality of absoluteness is, in fact, the point debated. The “purpose” and “counsel” of God are the scriptural terms applicable to this subject; one of which, “counsel,” expresses



an act of wisdom, and the other necessarily implies it, as it is the "purpose," design, or determination of a Being of infinite perfection, who can purpose, design, will, and determine nothing but under the direction of his intelligence, and the regulation of his moral attributes.

Terms are not, indeed, to be objected to, merely because they are not found in the word of God ; but their signification must be controlled by it, otherwise, as in the case of the term "decrees," a meaning is often silently brought in under covert of the term, which becomes a postulate in argument ; a practice which has been a fruitful source of misapprehension and error. "The decrees of God," if the phrase then must be continued, can only scripturally signify the determinations of his will in his government of the world he has made ; and those determinations are plainly, in Scripture, referred to two classes,—what he has himself determined to do, and what he has determined to permit to be done by free and accountable creatures. He determined, for instance, to create man, and he determined to permit his fall ; he determined also the only method of dispensing pardon to the guilty ; but he determined to permit men to reject it, and to fall into the punishment of their offences. Calvin, indeed, rejects the doctrine of permission. "It is not probable," he says, "that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, and without any appointment, of God." He had reason for this ; for to have allowed this distinction would have been contrary to the main principles of his theological system, which are, that "the will of God is the necessity of things," and that all things are previously fixed by an absolute decree ; so that they must happen. The consequence is, that he and his followers involve themselves in the tremendous consequence of making God the author of sin ; which, after all their disavowals, (and we grant them sincere,) will still logically cleave to them : For it is obvious, that by nothing can we fairly avoid this consequence but by allowing the distinction between determinations to do, on the part of God, and determinations to permit certain things to be done by others. The principle laid down by Calvin is destructive of all human agency, seeing it converts man into a mere instru-

ment; whilst the other maintains his agency in its proper sense, and, therefore, his proper accountability. On Calvin's principle, man is no more an agent than the knife in the hand of the assassin; and he is not more responsible, therefore, in equity, to punishment, than the knife by which the assassination is committed, were it capable of being punished. For if man has not a real agency, that is, if there is a necessity above him so controlling his actions as to render it impossible that they should have been otherwise, he is in the hands of another, and not master of himself, and so his actions cease to be his own.

A determination to permit involves no such consequences. This is indeed acknowledged; but then, on the other hand, it is urged that this imposes an uncertainty upon the divine plans, and makes God dependent upon the acts of the creature. In neither of these allegations is there any weight; for as to the first, there can be no uncertainty in the principles of the administration of a Being who regulates the whole by the immutable rules of righteousness, holiness, truth, and goodness; so that all the acts of the creature do but call forth some new illustration of his unchangeable regard to these principles. Nor can any act of a creature render his plans uncertain by coming upon him by surprise, and thus oblige him to alter his intentions on the spur of the moment. What the creature will do, in fact, is known beforehand with a perfect prescience, which yet, as we have already proved,\* interferes not with the liberty of our actions; and what God has determined to do in consequence, is made apparent by what he actually does, which with him can be no new, no sudden, thought, but known and purposed from eternity, in the view of the actual circumstances. As to the second objection, that this makes his conduct dependent upon the acts of the creature, so far from denying it, we may affirm this to be one of the plainest doctrines of the word of God. He punishes or blesses men according to their conduct; and he waits until the acts of their sin or their obedience take place, before he either punishes or rewards.

\* Part ii., chap. 4.

The dealings of a sovereign Judge must, in the nature of things themselves, be dependent upon the conduct of the subjects over whom he rules : They must vary according to that conduct ; and it is only in the principles of a righteous government that we ought to look for that kind of immutability which has any thing in it of moral character. Still, it is said, that though the acts of God, as a Sovereign, change, and are, apparently, dependent upon the conduct of creatures, yet that he, from all eternity, decreed or determined to do them : As, for instance, to exalt one nation, and to abase another ; to favour this individual, or to punish that ; to save this man, to destroy the other. This may be granted ; but only in this sense, that his eternal determination or decree was as dependent and consequent upon his prescience of the acts which, according to the immutable principles of his nature and government, are pleasing or hateful to him, as the actual administration of favour or punishment is upon the actual conduct of men in time. This brings on the question of decrees absolute or conditional ; and we are, happily, not left to the reasonings of men on this point ; but have the light of the word of God, which abounds with examples of decrees, to which conditions are annexed, on the performance or neglect of which, by his creatures, their execution is made dependent. “ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? But if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” If this was God’s eternal decree concerning Cain, then it was plainly conditional from eternity ; for his decrees in time cannot contradict his decrees from eternity, as to the same persons and events. But Cain did not well : Was it not, then, says a Calvinist, eternally and absolutely decreed that he should not do well ? The reply is, No ; because this supposed absolute decree of the Calvinists would contradict the revealed decree or determination of God, to put both the doing well and the doing ill into Cain’s own power, which is utterly inconsistent with an absolute decree that he should have it in his power only to do ill ; and the inevitable conclusion, therefore, is, that the only eternal decree, or divine determination, concerning Cain in this matter was, that he should be conditionally accepted, or conditionally left to the punishment



of his sins. To this class of conditional decrees belong, also, all such passages as, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword.” “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This last, especially, is God’s decree or determination, as to all who hear the Gospel, to the end of time. It professes to be so on the very face of it, for its general and unrestricted nature cannot be denied; but if we are told, that there is a decree affecting numbers of men as individuals, by which God determined absolutely to pass them by, and to deny to them the grace of faith, this cannot be true; because it contradicts a decree revealed by God himself. His decree gives to all who hear the news of Christ’s salvation the alternative of believing and being saved, of not believing and being damned; but there is no alternative in the absolute decree of Calvinism: As to the reprobate, no one among them can believe and be saved; God never intended he should; and therefore he is put by one decree in one condition, and by another decree in an entirely opposite condition, which is producing an obvious contradiction in the decrees of God.

But we have instances of the revocation of God’s decrees, as well as of their conditional character, one of which will be sufficient for illustration. In the case of Eli: “I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” No passage can more strongly refute the Calvinistic notion of God’s immutability. This they seem to place in his never changing his purpose; whereas, in fact, the scriptural doctrine is, that it consists in his never changing the principles of his administration. One of those principles is laid down in this passage,—“Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” To this principle God is immutably true; but it was his unchangeable regard to it which brought on the change

of his conduct towards the house of Eli, and induced him to revoke his former promise. This is the only immutability worthy of God, or which can be reconciled to the facts of his government. For either the advocate of absolute predestination must say, that recorded promises and threatenings are declarations of his will and purposes, or they are not. If they are not, they contradict his truth; but if they do in fact declare his will, that will is either absolute or conditional. Let us, then, try the case of Eli by this alternative. If the promise of continuing the priesthood in the family of Eli were absolute, then it could not be revoked. If the threatening expressed an absolute and eternal will and determination to divert the priesthood from Eli's progeny, then the promise was a mockery, and God is in this, and all similar instances, made to engage himself to do what is contrary to his absolute intention and determination; in other words, he makes no engagement in fact, whilst he seems to do it in form, which involves a charge against the divine Being which few Calvinists would be bold enough to maintain. But if these declarations to Eli be regarded as the expressions of a determination always taken, in the mind of God, under the conditions implied in the fixed principles of his government, then the language and the acts of God harmonize with his sincerity and faithfulness, and, instead of throwing a shade over his moral attributes, illustrate his immutable regard to those wise, equitable, and holy rules by which he conducts his government of moral agents. Nor will the distinction which some Calvinists have endeavoured to establish between the promises and threatenings of God, and his decrees, serve them; for where is it to be found, except in their own imagination? We have no intimation of such a distinction in Scripture, which, nevertheless, professes to reveal the eternal "purpose" and "counsel" of God on those matters to which his promises and threatenings relate, the salvation or destruction of men. That counsel and purpose has, also, no manifestation in his word, but by promises and threatenings; these make up its whole substance; and therefore, in order to make their distinction good, those who hold it must discover a distinction, not only between God's promises and threatenings

and his decrees, but between the eternal counsels and purposes of God and his decrees, which they acknowledge to be identical.

The fallacy which seems to mislead them appears to be the following : They allege that of two consequences,—say the obedience or disobedience of Eli's house,—we acknowledge, on both sides, that one will happen. That which actually happens we also see taken up into the course of the divine administration, and made a part of God's subsequent plan of government, as the transfer of the priesthood from the house of Eli : They, therefore, argue that the divine Being having his plan before him, and this very circumstance entering into it, it was fixed from eternity as a part of that general scheme by which the purposes of God were to be accomplished, and which would have been uncertain and unarranged but for this pre-ordination. The answer to this is,—

1. That the circumstance of an event being taken up into the divine administration, and being made use of to work out God's ulterior purposes, is no proof that he willed and decreed it. He could not will the wickedness of Eli's sons ; and could not, therefore, ordain and appoint it, or his decrees would be contrary to his will. The making use of the result of the choice of a free agent only proves that it was foreseen, and that there are, so to speak, infinite resources in the divine mind to turn the actions of men into the accomplishment of his plans, without either willing them when they are evil, or imposing fetters upon their freedom.

2. That though an event be interwoven with the course of the divine government, it does not follow that it was necessary to it. The ends of a course of administration might have been otherwise accomplished ; as, in the case before us, if Eli's house had remained faithful, and the family of Zadok had not been chosen in its stead. The general plan of God's government does not, therefore, necessarily include every event which happens as necessary to its accomplishment, since the same results might, in many cases, have been brought out of other events ; and, therefore, it cannot be



conclusively argued, that as God wills the accomplishment of the general plan, he must will in the same manner the particular events which he may overrule to contribute to it. But,—

3. As to the general plan, it is also an unfounded assumption, that it was the subject of an absolute determination. From this has arisen the notion that the fall of Adam was willed and decreed by God. To this doctrine which, for the sake of a metaphysical speculation, draws after it so many abhorrent and anti-scriptural consequences, we must demur. God could not will that event actively without willing sin; he could not absolutely decree it without removing all responsibility, and, therefore, all fault, from the first offender. If God be holy, he could not will Adam's offence, though he might determine not to prevent it by interfering with man's freedom, which is a very different case; and if in guarding his law from violation by a severe sanction he proceeded with sincerity, he could not appoint its violation. We may confidently say, that he willed the contrary of Adam's offence, and that he used all means, consistent with his determination to give and maintain free agency to his creatures, to secure the accomplishment of that will. It was against his will, therefore, that our progenitors sinned and fell; and his "purpose" and "counsel," or his "decree," if the term please better, to govern the world according to the principles and mode now in operation, was dependent upon an event which he willed not, but which, as being foreseen, was the plan that he, in wisdom, justice, and mercy, adopted in the view of this contingency. And suppose we were to acknowledge, with some, that the result will be more glorious to him, and more beneficial to the universe, through the wisdom with which he overrules all things, than if Adam and his descendants had stood in their innocency, it will not follow, even from this, that the present was that order of events which God absolutely ordered and decreed. We are told, indeed, that if this was the best of possible plans, God was, by the perfection of his nature, bound to choose it; and that if he chose it, his will, in this respect, made all the rest necessary. But, to say nothing of the presumption of deter-

mining what God was bound to do in any hypothetic case, the position, that God must choose the best of possible plans, is to be taken with qualification. We can neither prove that the state of things, which shall actually issue, is the best among those possible; nor that among possible systems there can be a best, since they are all composed of created things, and no system can actually exist, to which the Creator, who is infinite in power, could not add something. Were no sin involved in the case, it would be clearer; but it is not only unsupported by any declaration of Scripture, but certainly contrary to many of its principles, to assume that God originally, so to speak, and in the first instance, willed and decreed a state of things which should necessarily include the introduction of moral evil into his creation, in order to manifest his glory, and work out future good to the creature, because we know that sin is that "abominable thing" which he hateth. A Monarch is surely not bound secretly to appoint and decree the circumstances which must necessarily lead to a rebellion, in order that his clemency may be more fully manifested in pardoning the rebels, or the strength of his government displayed in their subjugation, although his subjects, upon the whole, might derive some higher benefit thereby. We may, therefore, conclude, that God willed with perfect truth and sincerity that man should not fall, although he resolved not to prevent that fall by interfering with his freedom, which would have changed the whole character of his government towards rational creatures; and that his plan, or decree, to govern the world upon the principle of redemption and mediation was no absolute ordination, but conditional upon man's offence, and was an "eternal purpose" only in the eternal foresight of the actual occurrence of the fall of man, which yet, it is no contradiction to say, was against his will.

So fallacious are all such notions as to God's fixed plans. Fixed they may be, without being absolutely decreed, because fixed, in reference to what takes place, even in opposition to his will and intention; and as to the argument drawn by Calvinists from the perfections of God, it is surely a more

honourable view of him to suppose that his will and his promulgated law accord and consent, than that they are in opposition to each other ; more honourable to him, that he is immutable in his adherence to the principles, rather than in the acts, of government ; more honourable to him, that he can make the conduct of his free creatures to work out either his original purposes, or purposes more glorious to himself and beneficial to the universe, than that he should frame plans so fixed as to have no reference to the free actions of creatures, whom, by a strange contradiction, he is represented as still holding accountable for their conduct ; plans which all these creatures shall be necessitated to fulfil, so as to be capable of no other course of action whatever, or else that his government must become loose and uncertain. This is, indeed, to have low thoughts even of the infinite wisdom of God, and either involves his justice and truth in deep obscurity, or presents them to us under very equivocal aspects. Which of these views is the most consonant with the Bible, may be safely left with the candid reader.

The prescience of God is also a subject by which Calvinists have endeavoured to give some plausibility to their system. The argument, as popularly stated, has been, that, as the destruction or salvation of every individual is foreseen, it is therefore certain, and, as certain, it is inevitable and necessary. The answer to this is, that certainty and necessity are not at all connected in the nature of things, and are, in fact, two perfectly distinct predicaments. Certainty has no relation at all to an event as evitable or inevitable, free or compelled, contingent or necessary. It relates only to the issue itself, the act of any agent, not to the quality of the act or event with reference to the circumstances under which it is produced. A free action is as much an event as a necessitated one, and, therefore, is as truly an object of foresight ; which foresight cannot change the nature of the action, or of the process through which it issues, because the simple knowledge of an action, whether present, past, or to come, has no influence upon it of any kind. Certainty is, in fact, no quality of an action at all ; it exists, properly speaking, in the mind fore-



seeing, and not in the action foreseen ; but freedom or constraint, contingency or necessity, qualify the action itself, and determine its nature, and the rewardableness, or punitive demerit, of the agent. When, therefore, it is said, that what God foresees will certainly happen, nothing more can be reasonably meant, than that he is certain that it will happen ; so that we must not transfer the certainty from God to the action itself, in the false sense of necessity, or indeed in any sense ; for the certainty is in the divine mind, and stands there opposed, not to the contingency of the action, but to doubtfulness as to the result. There is this certainty in the divine mind as to the actions of men, that they will happen ; but that they must happen, cannot follow from this circumstance. If they must happen, they are under some control which prevents a different result ; but the most certain knowledge has nothing in it which, from its nature, can control an action in any way, unless it should lead the being endowed with it to adopt measures to influence the action, and then it becomes a question, not of foreknowledge, but of power and influence, which wholly changes the case. This is a sufficient reply to the popular manner of stating the argument. The scholastic method requires a little more illustration.

The knowledge of possible things, as existing from all eternity in the divine understanding, has been termed *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, or, by the Schoolmen, *scientia indefinita*, as not determining the existence of any thing. The knowledge which God had of all real existences is termed *scientia visionis*, and, by the Schoolmen, *scientia definita*, because the existence of all objects of this knowledge is determinate and certain. To these distinctions another was added by those who rejected the predestinarian hypothesis, to which they gave the name *scientia media*, as being supposed to stand in the middle between the two former. By this is understood, the knowledge, neither of things as possible, nor of events appointed and decreed by God ; but of events which are to happen upon certain conditions.\*

\* *Ordo autem hic ut rectè intelligi possit, observandum est triplicem Deo scientiam tribui solere ; unam necessariam, quæ omnem voluntatis liberæ actum*

The third kind of knowledge, or *scientia media*, might very well be included in the second, since *scientia visionis* ought to include, not what God will do, and what his creatures will do under his appointment, but what they will do by his permission as free agents, and what he will do, as a consequence of this, in his character of Governor and Lord. But since the predestinarians had confounded *scientia visionis* with a predestinating decree, the *scientia media* well expressed what they had left quite unaccounted for, and which they had assumed did not really exist,—the actions of creatures endowed with free will, and the acts of Deity which from eternity were consequent upon them. If such actions do not take place, then men are not free; and if the rectoral acts of God are not consequent upon the actions of the creature in the order of the divine intention, and the conduct of the creature is consequent upon the fore-ordained rectoral acts of God, then we reach a necessitating eternal decree, which, in fact, the predestinarian contends for; but it unfortunately brings after it consequences which no subtilties have ever been able to shake off,—that the only actor in the universe is God himself; and that the only distinction among events is, that one class is brought to pass by God directly, and the other indirectly, not by the agency, but by the mere instrumentality, of his creatures.

The manner in which absolute predestination is made identical with *scientia visionis*, will be best illustrated by an extract from the writings of a tolerably fair and temperate modern Calvinist. Speaking of the two distinctions, *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* and *scientia visionis*, he says,

“Those who consider all the objects of knowledge as *com-naturæ ordine antecedit, quæ etiam practica et simplicis intelligentiæ dici potest, quâ seipsum et alia omnia possibilis intelligit. Alteram liberam, quæ consequitur actum voluntatis liberæ, quæ etiam visionis dici potest; quâ Deus omnia, quæ facere et permittere decrevit ita distinctè novit, uti ea fieri et permittere voluit. Tertiam mediam, quâ sub conditione novit quid homines aut angeli facturi essent pro suâ libertate, si cum his aut illis circumstantiis, in hoc vel in illo rerum ordine, constituerentur.—Disputat. EPISCOPII, Pars i., Disp. 5.*

prehended under one or other of the kinds that have been explained, are naturally conducted to that enlarged conception of the extent of the divine decree, from which the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination unavoidably follows. The divine decree is the determination of the divine will to produce the universe, that is, the whole series of beings and events that were then future. The parts of this series arise in succession ; but all were, from eternity, present to the divine mind ; and no cause that was, at any time, to operate, or no effect that was at any time to be produced in the universe, can be excluded from the original decree, without supposing that the decree was at first imperfect and afterwards received accessions. The determination to produce this world, understanding by that word the whole combination of beings, and causes, and effects, that were to come into existence, arose out of the view of all possible worlds, and proceeded upon reasons to us unsearchable, by which this world that now exists appeared to the divine wisdom the fittest to be produced. I say, the determination to produce this world proceeded upon reasons ; because, we must suppose, that in forming the decrees, a choice was exerted ; that the supreme Being was at liberty to resolve either that he would create or that he would not create ; that he would give his work this form or that form, as he chose ; otherwise, we withdraw from the supreme Intelligence, and subject all things to blind fatality. But if a choice was exerted in forming the decree, the choice must have proceeded upon reasons ; for a choice made by a wise being, without any ground of choice, is a contradiction in terms. At the same time, it is to be remembered, that as nothing then existed but the supreme Being, the only reason which could determine him in choosing what he was to produce, was its appearing to him fitter for accomplishing the end which he proposed to himself than any thing else which he might have produced. Hence *scientia visionis* is called by theologians *scientia libera*. To *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* they gave the epithet *naturalis*, because the knowledge of all things possible arises necessarily from the nature of the Supreme mind ; but to *scientia visionis* they gave the epithet



*libera*, because the qualities and extent of its objects are determined, not by any necessity of nature, but by the will of the Deity. Although in forming the divine decree there was a choice of this world, proceeding upon a representation of all possible worlds, it is not to be conceived that there was any interval between the choice and representation, or any succession in the parts of the choice. In the divine mind there was an intuitive view of that immense subject, which it is not only impossible for our minds to comprehend at once, but in travelling through the parts of which we are instantly bewildered; and one decree, embracing at once the end and means, ordained with perfect wisdom all that was to be.

“The condition of the human race entered into this decree. It is not, perhaps, the most important part of it when we speak of the formation of the universe; but it is a part which, even were it more insignificant than it is, could not be overlooked by the Almighty, whose attention extends to all his works, and which appears, by those dispensations of his providence that have been made known to us, to be interesting in his eyes. A decree respecting the condition of the human race includes the history of every individual; the time of his appearing upon the earth; the manner of his existence while he is an inhabitant of the earth, as it is diversified by the actions which he performs, and by the events, whether prosperous or calamitous, which befall him; and the manner of his existence after he leaves the earth, that is, future happiness or misery. A decree respecting the condition of the human race also includes the relations of the individuals to one another; it fixes their connexions in society, which have a great influence upon their happiness and their improvement; and it must be conceived as extending to the important events recorded in Scripture, in which the whole species have a concern. Of this kind is the sin of our first parents, the consequence of that sin reaching to all their posterity, the mediation of Jesus Christ appointed by God as a remedy for these consequences, the final salvation, through his mediation, of one part of the descendants of Adam, and the final

condemnation of another part, notwithstanding the remedy. These events arise at long intervals of time, by a gradual preparation of circumstances, and the operation of various means. But by the Creator, to whose mind the end and means were at once present, these events were beheld in intimate connexion with one another, and in conjunction with many other events to us unknown ; and consequently all of them, however far removed from one another as to the time of their actual existence, were comprehended in that one decree by which he determined to produce the world." \*

Now, some things in this statement may be granted ; as, for instance, that when the choice, speaking after the manner of men, was between creating the world and not creating it, it appeared fitter to God to create than not to create ; and that all actual events were foreseen, and will take place, so far as they are future, as they are foreseen ; but where is the connexion between these points, and that absolute decree which in this passage is taken for either the same thing as foreseeing, or as necessarily involved in it ? "The divine decree," says Dr. Hill, "is the determination of the divine will to produce the universe, that is, the whole series of beings and events that were then future." If so, it follows, that it was the divine will to produce the fall of man, as well as his creation ; the offences which made redemption necessary, as well as the redemption itself ; to produce the destruction of human beings, and their vices, which are the means of that destruction ; the salvation of another part of the race, and their faith and obedience, as the means of that salvation ; for by one "decree, embracing at once the end and the means, he ordained, with perfect wisdom, all that was to be." This is in the true character of the Calvinistic theology ; it dogmatizes with absolute confidence on some metaphysical assumption, and forgets for the time, that any such book as the Bible, a revelation of God, by God himself, exists in the world. If the determination of the divine will, with respect to the creation of man, were the same

\* Hill's Lectures, vol. iii., p. 38.

kind of determination as that which respected his fall, how then are we to account for the means taken by God to prevent the fall, which were no less than the communication of an upright and perfect nature to man, from which his ability to stand in his uprightness arose, and the threatening of the greatest calamity, death, in order to deter him from the act of offence? How, in that case, are we to account for the declarations of God's hatred to sin, and for his own express declaration that "he willeth not the death of him that dieth?" How, for the obstructions he has placed in the way of transgression, which would be obstructions to his own determinations, if they can be allowed to be obstructions at all? How, for the intercession of Christ? How, for his tears shed over Jerusalem? Finally, how, for the declaration that "he willeth all men to be saved," and for his invitations to all, and the promises made to all? Here the discrepancies between the metaphysical scheme and the written word are most strongly marked; are so totally irreconcilable to each other, as to leave us to choose between the speculations of man, as to the operations of the divine mind, and the declared will of God himself. The fact is, that Scripture can only be interpreted by denying that the determination of the divine will is, as to beings and events, the same kind of determination; and we are necessarily brought back again to the only distinction which is compatible with the written word, a determination in God to do, and a determination to permit. For if we admit that the decree to effect or produce is absolute, both as to the end and means, then, beside the consequences which follow as above stated, and which so directly contradict the testimony of God himself, another equally revolting also arises, namely, that as the end decreed is, as we are told, most glorious to God, so the means, being controlled and directed to that end, are necessarily and directly connected with the glorification of God; and so men glorify God by their vices, because by them they fulfil his will, and work out his designs according to the appointment of his wisdom. That this has been boldly contended for by leading Calvinistic Divines in former times, and by some, though of an inferior class, in the present day, is well known; and that they



are consistent in their deductions from the above premises, is so obvious that it is matter of surprise, that those Calvinists who are shocked at this conclusion should not either suspect the principles from which it so certainly flows, or that, admitting the doctrine, they should shun the explicit avowal of the inevitable consequence.

The sophistry of the above statement of the Calvinistic view of prescience and the decrees, as given by Dr. Hill, lies in this, that the determination of the divine will to produce the universe is made to include a determination as absolute "to produce the whole series of beings and events that were then future;" and in assuming that this is involved in a perfect prescience of things, as actually to exist and take place. But among the "beings" to be produced, were not only beings bound by their instincts, and by circumstances which they could not control, to act in some given manner; but also beings endowed with such freedom that they might act in different and opposite ways, as their own will might determine. Either this must be allowed or denied. If it is denied, then man is not a free agent, and therefore not accountable for his personal offences, if offences those acts can be called, to the doing of which there is "a determination of the divine will," of the same nature as to the "producing of the universe" itself. This, however, is so destructive of the nature of virtue and vice; it so entirely subverts the moral government of God by merging it into his natural government; and it so manifestly contradicts the word of God, which, from the beginning to the end, supposes a power bestowed on man to avoid sin, and on this establishes his accountableness; that, with all these fatal consequences hanging upon it, we may leave this notion to its own fate. But if any such freedom be allowed to man, (either actually enjoyed, or placed within his reach by the use of means which are within his power,) that he may both will and act differently, in any given case, from his ultimate volitions and the acts resulting therefrom, then cannot that which he actually does, as a free agent, say some sinful act, have been determined in the same manner by the divine will, as the production of the universe and the beings which compose it. For if man

is a being free to sin or not to sin, and it was the determination of the divine will to produce such a being, it was his determination to give to him this liberty of not doing that which actually he does ; which is wholly contrary to a determination that he should act in one given manner, and in that alone. For here, on the one hand, it is alleged that the divine Being absolutely determines to produce certain events, and yet, on the other, it is plain that he absolutely determined to produce beings who should, by his will and consequent endowment, have in themselves the power to produce contrary events ; propositions which manifestly fight with each other, and cannot both be true. We must either, then, give up man's free agency and true accountability, or this absolute determination of events. The former cannot be renounced without involving the consequences above stated ; and the abandoning of the latter brings us to the only conclusion which agrees with the word of God,—that the acts of free agents are not determined, but foreseen and permitted ; and are thus taken up, not as the acts of God, but as the acts of men, into the divine government. “Ye devised evil against me,” says Joseph to his brethren, “but God meant it for good.” Thus the principle which vitiates Dr. Hill's statement is detected. Grotius has much better observed, “When we say that God is the cause of all things, we mean of all such things as have a real existence ; which is no reason why those things themselves should not be the cause of some accidents, such as actions are. God created men, and some other intelligences superior to man, with a liberty of acting ; which liberty of acting is not in itself evil, but may be the cause of something that is evil ; and to make God the author of evils of this kind, which are called ‘moral evils,’ is the highest wickedness.”\*

Perhaps the notions which Calvinists form as to the human will may be regarded as a consequence of the predestinarian branch of their system ; but whether they are among the metaphysical causes of this error, or consequents upon it, they may here have a brief notice.

If the doctrine just refuted were allowed, namely, that all events are produced by the determination of the divine will, and that the end and means are bound up in one decree, the predestinarian had sagacity enough to discern, that, to make the scheme consistent, the volitions as well as the acts of men must be placed equally under bondage; and that, whenever any moral action is the end proposed, the choice of the will, as the means to that end, must come under the same appointment and determination. It is, indeed, not denied, that creatures may lose the power to will that which is morally good. Such is the state of devils; and such would have been the state of man, had he been left wholly to the consequences of the fall. The inability is, however, not a natural, but a moral, one; for volition, as a power of the mind, is not destroyed, but brought so completely under the dominion of a corrupt nature, as not to be morally capable of choosing any thing but evil. If man is not in this condition, it is owing, not to the remains of original goodness, as some suppose, but to that grace of God which is the result of the free gift bestowed upon all men; and that the power to choose that which is good, in some respects, and as a first step to the entire and exclusive choice of good in the highest degree, is in man's possession, must be certainly concluded from the calls so often made upon him in the word of God to change his conduct, and, in order to this, his will. "Hear, ye deaf, and see, ye blind," is the exhortation of a Prophet; which, whilst it charges both spiritual deafness and blindness upon the Jews, supposes a power existing in them, both of opening the eyes, and unstopping the ears. Such are all the exhortations to repentance and faith addressed to sinners, and the threatenings consequent upon continued impenitence and unbelief; which equally suppose a power of considering, willing, and acting, in all things adequate to the commencement of a religious course. From whatever source it may be derived,—and no other can be assigned to it consistently with the Scriptures than the grace of God,—this power must be experienced to the full extent of the call and the obligation to these duties. A power of choosing only to do evil, and of remaining impenitent, cannot be reconciled



to such exhortations. This would but be a mockery of man, and a mere show of equitable government on the part of God, without any thing, in point of fact, correspondent to this appearance of equity. The Calvinistic doctrine, however, takes another course. As the sin and the destruction of the reprobate are determined by the decree, and their will is either left to its natural proneness to the choice of evil, or is, by co-action, impelled to it ; so the salvation of the elect being absolutely decreed, the will, at the appointed time, comes under an irresistible impulse which carries it to the choice of good. Nor is this only an occasional influence, leaving men afterwards, or by intervals, to freedom of choice, which might be allowed ; but, in all cases, and at all times, the will, when directed to good, moves only under the unfrustrable impulses of grace. That man, therefore, has no choice, or at least no alternative, in either case, is the doctrine assumed ; and no other view can be consistently taken by those who admit the scheme of absolute predestination. To one class of objects is the will determined ; no other being, in either case, possible : And thus one course of action, fulfilling the decree of God, is the only possible result, or the decree would not be absolute and fixed.

Some Calvinists have adopted all the consequences which follow this view of the subject. They ascribe the actions and volitions of man to God, and regard sinful men as impelled to a necessity of sinning, in order to the infliction of that punishment which they think will glorify the sovereign wrath of Him who made “ the wicked ” intentionally “ for the day of evil.” Enough has been said in refutation of this gross and blasphemous opinion, which, although it inevitably follows from absolute predestination, the more moderate writers of the same school have endeavoured to hide under various guises, or to reconcile to some show of justice by various subtilities.

It has, for instance, been contended, that, as in the case of transgressors, the evil acts done by them are the choice of their corrupt will, they are, therefore, done willingly ; and that they are, in consequence, punishable, although their will could not

but choose them. This may be allowed to be true in the case of devils, supposing them at first to have voluntarily corrupted an innocent nature endowed with the power of maintaining its innocence, and that they were under no absolute decree determining them to this offence. For, though now their will is so much under the control of their bad passions, and is in itself so vicious, that it has no disposition at all to good ; and, from their nature remaining in its present state, can have no such tendency ; yet the original act, or series of acts, by which this state of their will and affections was induced, having been their own, and the result of a deliberate choice between moral good and evil, each being in their power, they are justly held to be culpable for all that follows, having had, originally, the power to avoid both the first sin and all others consequent upon it. The same may be said of sinful men, who have formed in themselves, by repeated acts of evil, at first easily avoided, various habits to which the will opposes a decreasing resistance in proportion as they acquire strength. Such persons, too, as are spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews, those whom “ it is impossible to renew unto repentance,” may be regarded as approaching very nearly to the state of apostate spirits, and, being left without any of the aids of that Holy Spirit whom they have quenched, cannot be supposed capable of willing good. Yet are they themselves justly chargeable with this state of their wills, and all the evils resulting from it. But the case of devils is widely different from that of men, who, by their hereditary corruption, and the fall of human nature, to which they were not consenting parties, come into the world with this infirm, and indeed perverse, state of the will, as to all good. It is not their personal fault that they are born with a will averse from good ; and it cannot be their personal fault that they continue thus inclined only to evil, if no assistance has been afforded, no gracious influence imparted, to counteract this fault of nature, and to set the will so far free that it can choose either the good urged upon it by the authority and exciting motives of the Gospel, or, “ making light ” of that, to yield itself, in opposition to conviction, to the evil to which it is by nature prone. It is not denied, that the will, in its

purely natural state, and independent of all grace communicated to man through Christ, can incline only to evil ; but the question is, whether it is so left ; and whether, if this be contended for, the circumstance of a sinful act being the act of a will not able to determine otherwise, from whatever cause that may arise, from the influence of circumstances, from co-action, or from its own invincible depravity, renders him punishable who never had the means of preventing his will from lapsing into this diseased and vitiated state, who was born with this moral disease, and who, by an absolute decree, has been excluded from all share in the remedy ? This is the only simple and correct way of viewing the subject ; and it is quite independent of all metaphysical hypotheses as to the will. The Calvinistic argument is, that an act which has the consent of the will is punishable, although the will can only choose evil : We reply, that this is only true where the time of trial is past, as in devils and apostates ; and then only, because these are personally guilty of having so vitiated their wills as to render them incapable of good. But the case of men who have fallen by the fault of another, and who are still in a state of trial, is one totally different. The sentence is passed upon devils, and it is as good as passed upon such apostates as the Apostle describes in the Epistle to the Hebrews ; but the mass of mankind are still probationers, and are appointed to be judged according to their works in this life, whether good or evil. We deny, then, first, that they are, in any case, left without the power of willing good ; and we deny it on the authority of Scripture. For, in no sense, can life and death be set before us, in order that we may choose life, if a man is wholly derelict by the grace of God, and if he remains under his natural, and, but for the grace of God given to all mankind, his invincible inclination to evil. For if this be the natural state of mankind, and if to a part of them that remedial grace is denied, then is not life set before them as an object of choice ; and if to another part that grace is so given, that it irresistibly and constantly works so as to compel the will to choose predetermined and absolutely-appointed acts, no death is set before them as an object of choice. If, there-



fore, according to the Scriptures, both life and death are set before men, then have they power to choose or refuse either, which is conclusive, on the one hand, against the doctrine of the total dereliction of the reprobate, and on the other, against the unfrustrable operation of grace upon the elect. So, also, when our Lord says, "I would have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," the notion that men who finally perish have no power of willing that which is good is totally disproved. The blame is manifestly, and beyond all the arts of cavilling criticism, laid upon their not willing in a contrary manner to what they have done, which would be false upon the Calvinistic hypothesis. "I would not, and ye could not," ought, in that case, to have been the reading; since they are bound to one determination only, either by the external or internal influence of another, or by a natural and involuntary disease of the will, for which no remedy was ever provided.

Thus it is decided by the word of God itself, that men who perish might have "chosen life." It is confirmed, also, by natural reason; for it is most egregiously to trifle with the common sense of mankind to call that a righteous procedure in God which would by all men be condemned as a monstrous act of tyranny and oppression in a human Judge, namely, to punish capitally, as for a personal offence, those who never could will or act otherwise, being impelled by an invincible and incurable natural impulse over which they never had any control. Nor is the case at all amended by the quibble that they act willingly, that is, with consent of the will; for since the will is under a natural and irresistible power to incline only one way, obedience is full as much out of their power by this state of the will, which they did not bring upon themselves, as if they were restrained from all obedience to the law of God by an external and irresistible impulse always acting upon them.

The case, thus kept upon the basis of plain Scripture, and the natural reason of mankind, stands, as we have said, clear of all metaphysical subtilties, and cannot be subjected to their determination; but as attempts have been made to establish

the doctrine of necessity, from the actual phenomena of the human will, we may glance, also, at this philosophic attempt to give plausibility to the predestinarian hypothesis.

The philosophic doctrine is, that the will is swayed by motives, that motives arise from circumstances, that circumstances are ordered by a power above us, and beyond our control; and that, therefore, our volitions necessarily follow an order and chain of events appointed and decreed by infinite wisdom. President Edwards, in his well-known work on the will, applied this philosophy in aid of Calvinism, and has been largely followed by the Divines of that school. But who does not see that this attempt to find a refuge in the doctrine of philosophical necessity affords no shelter to the Calvinian system, when pressed either by Scripture, or by arguments founded upon the acknowledged principles of justice? For what matters it, whether the will is obliged to one class of volitions by the immediate influence of God, or by the denial of his remedial influence, the doctrine of the elder Calvinists; or that it is obliged to a certain class of volitions by motives which are irresistible in their operation, and which result from an arrangement of circumstances ordered by God, and which we cannot control? Take which theory you please, you are involved in the same difficulties; for the result is, that men can neither will nor act otherwise than they do, being, in one case, inevitably disabled by an act of God, and in the other, bound by a chain of events established by an Almighty power. The advocates for this philosophic theory of the will must be content to take this conclusion, therefore, and reconcile it as they can with the Scriptures; but they have the same task as their elder brethren of the same faith, and have made it no easier by their philosophy.

It is in vain, too, that they refer us to our own consciousness in proof of this theory. Nothing is more directly contradicted by what passes in every man's mind; and if we may take the terms human language has used on these subjects, as an indication of the general feelings of mankind, it is contradicted by the experience of all ages and countries. For if the will is thus absolutely dependent upon motives, and motives arise out

of uncontrollable circumstances, for men to praise or to blame each other is a manifest absurdity; and yet all languages abound in such terms. So, also, there can be no such thing as conscience, which, upon this scheme, is a popular delusion which a better philosophy might have dispelled. For why do I blame or commend myself in my inward thoughts, any more than I censure or praise others, if I am, as to my choice, but the passive creature of motives and pre-determined circumstances?

But the sophistry is easily detected. The notion inculcated is, that motives influence the will just as an additional weight thrown into an even scale poises it and inclines the beam. This is the favourite metaphor of the necessitarians; yet, to make the comparison good, they ought to have first proved the will to be as passive as the balance, or, in other words, they should have annihilated the distinction between mind and matter. But this necessary connexion between motive and volition may be denied. For what are motives, as rightly understood here? Not physical causes, as a weight thrown into a scale; but reasons of choice, views and conceptions of things in the mind, which, themselves, do not work the will, as a machine; but in consideration of which, the mind itself wills and determines. But if the mind itself were obliged to determine by the strongest motive, as the beam is to incline by the heaviest weight, it would be obliged to determine always by the best reason; for motive being but a reason of action considered in the mind, then the best reason, being in the nature of things the strongest, must always predominate. But this is plainly contrary to fact and experience. If it were not, all men would act reasonably, and none foolishly; or, at least, there would be no faults among them but those of the understanding, none of the heart and affections. The weakest reason, however, too generally succeeds when appetite and corrupt affection are present; that is to say, the weakest motive. For if this be not allowed, we must say, that under the influence of appetite the weakest reason always appears the strongest, which is also false in fact; for then there would



be no sins committed against judgment and conviction ; and that many of our sins are of this description, our consciences painfully convict us. That the mind wills and acts generally under the influence of motives, may, therefore, be granted ; but that it is passive, and operated upon by them necessarily, is disproved by the fact of our often acting under the weakest reason or motive, which is the character of all sins against our judgment.

But were we even to admit that present reasons or motives operate irresistibly upon the will, the necessary connexion between motive and volition would not be established ; unless it could be proved that we have no power to displace one motive by another, nor to control those circumstances from which motives flow. Yet, who will say that a person may not shun evil company and fly from many temptations ? Either this must be allowed, or else it must be a link in the necessary chain of events fixed by a superior power, that we should seek and not fly evil company ; and so the exhortations, “ When sinners entice thee, consent thou not,” and, “ Go not into the way of sinners,” are very impertinent, and only prove, indeed, that Solomon was no philosopher. But we are all conscious that we have the power to alter, and control, and avoid, the force of motives. If not, why does a man resist the same temptation at one time and yield to it at another, without any visible change of the circumstances ? He can also both change his circumstances by shunning evil company, and flying the occasions of temptation ; and control that motive at one time to which he yields at another, under similar circumstances. Nay, he sometimes resists a powerful temptation, which is the same thing as resisting a powerful motive, and yields at another to a feeble one, and is conscious that he does so : A sufficient proof that there is an irregularity and corruptness in the self-determining active power of the mind, independent of motive. Still, further, the motive or reason for an action may be a bad one, and yet be prevalent for want of the presence of a better reason or motive to lead to a contrary choice and act ; but, in how many instances is this the true cause why a better reason or stronger motive is not pre-

sent,—that we have lived thoughtless and vain lives, little considering the good or evil of things? And if so, then the thoughtless might have been more thoughtful, and the ignorant might have acquired better knowledge, and thereby have placed themselves under the influence of stronger and better motives. Thus this theory does not accord with the facts of our own consciousness, but contradicts them. It is also refuted by every part of the moral history of man; and it may be, therefore, concluded, that those speculations on the human will to which the predestinarian theory has driven its advocates, are equally opposed to the words of Scripture, to the philosophy of mind, to our observation of what passes in others, and to our own convictions.

Our moral liberty manifestly consists in the united power of thinking and reasoning, and of choosing and acting upon such thinking and reasoning; so that the clearer our thought and conception is of what is fit and right, and the more constantly our choice is determined by it, the more nearly we rise to the highest acts and exercises of this liberty. The best beings have, therefore, the highest degree of moral liberty, since no motive to will or act wrong is any thing else but a violation of this established and original connexion between right reason, choice, and conduct; and if any necessity bind the irrational motive upon the will, it is either the result of bad voluntary habit, for which we are accountable; or necessity of nature and circumstances, for which we are not accountable. In the former case, the actually influencing motive is evitable, and the theory of the necessitarians is disproved: In the latter, it is confirmed; but then man is neither responsible to his fellow-man nor to God.

Certain notions as to the divine sovereignty have also been resorted to by Calvinists, in order to render that scheme plausible which cuts off the greater part of the human race from the hope of salvation, by the absolute decree of God.

That the sovereignty of God is a scriptural doctrine, no one can deny; but it does not follow, that the notions which men please to form of it should be received as scriptural;

for religious errors consist not only in denying the doctrines of the word of God, but also in interpreting them fallaciously.

The Calvinistic view of God's sovereignty appears to be, his doing what he wills, only because he wills it. So Calvin himself has stated the case, as we have noticed above; but as this view is repugnant to all worthy notions of an infinitely wise Being, so it has no countenance in Scripture. The doctrine which we are there taught is, that God's sovereignty consists in his doing many things by virtue of his own supreme right and dominion, but that this right is under the direction of his counsel or wisdom. The brightest act of sovereignty is that of creation, and one in which, if in any, mere will might seem to have the chief place; yet, even in this act, by which myriads of beings of diverse powers and capacities were produced, we are taught that all was done in wisdom. Nor can it be said, that the sovereignty of God in creation is uncontrolled by either justice or goodness. If the final cause of creation had been the misery of all sentient creatures, and all its contrivance had tended to that end: If, for instance, every sight had been disgusting, every smell a stench, every sound a scream, and every necessary function of life had been performed with pain, we must necessarily have referred the creation of such a world to a malignant being: And, if we are obliged to think it impossible that a good being could have employed his almighty power with the direct intention to inflict misery, we then concede that his acts of sovereignty are, by the very perfection of his nature, under the direction of his goodness, as to all creatures potentially existing, or actually existing, whilst still innocent. Nor can we think it borne out by Scripture, or by the reasonable notions of mankind, that the exercise of God's sovereignty in the creation of things is exempt from any respect to justice, a quality of the divine nature which is nothing but his essential rectitude in exercise. It is true, that as existence, under all circumstances in which to exist is better upon the whole than not to exist, leaves the creature no claim to have been otherwise than it is made; and that as God has a sovereign right to make one being an archangel and another an



insect, so that "the thing formed" may not "say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" it could deserve nothing before creation, its being not having commenced, and all that it is, and has, (its existent state being better than non-existence,) is, therefore, a boon conferred; and, in matters of grace, no axiom can be more clear, than that he who gratuitously bestows has the right to do what he will with his own. But every creature, having been formed without any consent of its own, if it be innocent of offence, either from the rectitude of its nature, or from a natural incapacity of offending, as not being a moral agent, appears to have a claim, in natural right, upon exemption from such pains and sufferings, as would render existence a worse condition than never to have been called out of nothing. For, as a benevolent being, which God is acknowledged to be, cannot make a creature with such an intention and contrivance, that, by its very constitution, it must necessarily be wholly miserable; and we see in this, that his sovereignty is regulated by his goodness as to the commencement of the existence of sentient creatures; so, from the moment they begin to be, the government of God over them commences, and sovereignty in government necessarily grounds itself upon the principles of equity and justice, and the Judge of the whole earth must and will do right.

This is the manifest doctrine of Scripture; for, although Almighty God often gives "no account of his matters," nor, in some instances, admits us to know how he is both just and gracious in his administration, yet are we referred constantly to those general declarations of his own word, which assure us that he is so, that we may "walk by faith," and wait for that period, when, after the faith and patience of good men have been sufficiently tried, the manifestation of these facts shall take place to our comfort and to his glory. In many respects, so far as we are concerned, we see no other reason for his proceedings, than that he so wills to act. But the error into which our brethren often fall, is to conclude, from their want of information in such cases, that God acts merely because he wills so to act; that because he gives not those reasons for his conduct which we have no right to demand, he acts without

any reasons at all ; and, because we are not admitted to the secrets of his council-chamber, that his government is perfectly arbitrary, and that the main spring of his leading dispensations is to make a show of power ; a conclusion which implies a most unworthy notion of God, which he has himself contradicted in the most explicit manner. Even his most mysterious proceedings are called “ judgments ;” and he is said to work all things “ according to the counsel of his own will,” a collocation of words, which sufficiently show that not blind will, but will subject to “ counsel,” is that sovereign will which governs the world.

“ Whenever, therefore, God acts as a governor, as a rewarder, or punisher, he no longer acts as a mere Sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure, but as an impartial Judge, guided in all things by invariable justice.

“ Yet it is true, that, in some cases, mercy rejoices over justice, although severity never does. God may reward more, but he will never punish more, than strict justice requires. It may be allowed, that God acts as Sovereign in convincing some souls of sin, arresting them in their mad career by his resistless power. It seems, also, that, at the moment of our conversion, he acts irresistibly. There may likewise be many irresistible touches in the course of our Christian warfare ; but still, as St. Paul might have been either obedient or ‘ disobedient to the heavenly vision,’ so every individual may, after all that God has done, either improve his grace, or make it of none effect.

“ Whatever, therefore, it has pleased God to do, of his sovereign pleasure, as Creator of heaven and earth, and whatever his mercy may do on particular occasions, over and above what justice requires, the general rule stands firm as the pillars of heaven. ‘ The Judge of all the earth will do right ;’ ‘ he will judge the world in righteousness,’ and every man therein according to the strictest justice. He will punish no man for doing any thing which he could not possibly avoid ; neither for omitting any thing which he could not possibly do. Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished ; otherwise, to punish him

would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our governor.”\*

The case of heathen nations has sometimes been referred to by Calvinists, as presenting equal difficulties with those urged against their scheme of election and reprobation. But the cases are not at all parallel; nor can they be made so, unless it could be proved that Heathens, as such, are inevitably excluded from the kingdom of heaven; which is not, as some of them seem to suppose, a conceded point. Those, indeed, if there be any such, who, believing in the universal redemption of mankind, should allow this, would be most inconsistent with themselves, and give up many of those principles on which they successfully contend against the doctrine of absolute reprobation; but the argument lies in small compass, and is to be determined by the word of God, and not by the speculations of men. The actual state of pagan nations is affectingly bad; but nothing against their salvability can be deduced from what they are in fact; for although there is no ground to hope for the salvation of great numbers of them, actual salvation is one thing, and possible salvation is another. Nor does it affect this question, if we see not how Heathens may be saved; that is, by what means repentance, and faith, and righteousness should be in any such degree wrought in them, as that they shall become acceptable to God. The dispensation of religion under which those nations are placed to whom the Gospel has never been sent, continues to be the patriarchal dispensation. That men were saved under that in former times we know; and at what point, if any, a religion becomes so far corrupted, and truth so far extinct, as to leave no means of salvation to men, nothing to call forth a true faith in principle, and obedience to what remains known or knowable of the original law, no one has the right to determine, unless he can adduce some authority from Scripture. That authority is certainly not available to the conclusion, that, in point of fact, the means of salvation are utterly withdrawn from Heathens. We may say that a murderous, adulterous, and idolatrous Heathen will

\* Wesley's Works, vol. x., pp. 362, 363.



be shut out from the kingdom of heaven ; we must say this, on the express exclusion of all such characters from future blessedness by the word of God ; but it would be little to the purpose to say, that, as far as we know, all of them are wicked and idolatrous. As far as we know they may, but we do not know the whole case ; and, were these charges universally true, yet the question is not, what the Heathen are, but what they have had the means of becoming. We indeed know that all are not equally vicious ; nay, that some virtuous Heathens have been found in all ages ; and some earnest and anxious inquirers after truth, dissatisfied with the notions prevalent in their own countries respectively ; and what these few were, the rest might have been likewise. But, if we knew no such instances of superior virtue and eager desire of religious information among them, the true question,—What degree of truth is, after all, attainable by them ?—would still remain a question which must be determined, not so much by our knowledge of facts, which must be very obscure, but by such principles and general declarations as we find applicable to the case in the word of God.

If all knowledge of right and wrong, and all gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, and all objects of faith have passed away from the Heathen, through the fault of their ancestors not liking to “retain God in their knowledge,” and without the present race having been parties to this wilful abandonment of truth, then they would appear no longer to be accountable creatures, being neither under law nor under grace ; but as we find it a doctrine of Scripture that all men are responsible to God, and that the whole world will be judged at the last day, we are bound to admit the accountability of all, and, with that, the remains of law and the existence of a merciful government towards the Heathen on the part of God. With this the doctrine of St. Paul accords. No one can take stronger views of the actual danger and the corrupt state of the Gentiles than he ; yet he affirms that the divine law had not perished wholly from among them ; that though they had received no revealed law, yet they had a law written on their hearts ; meaning, no doubt, the traditionary law, the equity of which their consciences

attested ; and, further, that though they had not the written law, yet that, “ by nature,” that is, “ without an outward rule, though this, also, strictly speaking, is by preventing grace, they were capable of doing all the things contained in the law.”\* He affirms, too, that all such Gentiles as were thus obedient, should be “ justified in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to his Gospel.” The possible obedience and the possible justification of Heathens who have no written revelation, are points, therefore, distinctly affirmed by the Apostle in his discourse in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans ; and the whole matter of God’s sovereignty, as to the Heathen, is reduced, not to the leaving of any portion of our race without the means of salvation, and then punishing them for sins which they have no means of avoiding ; but to the fact of his having given superior advantages to us, and inferior ones only to them ;—a proceeding which we see exemplified in the most enlightened of Christian nations every day ; for neither every part of the same nation is equally favoured with the means of grace, nor are all the families living in the same town and neighbourhood equally circumstanced as to the means of religious influence and improvement. The principle of this inequality is, however, far different from that on which Calvinistic reprobation is sustained ; since it involves no inevitable exclusion of any individual from the kingdom of God, and because the general principle of God’s administration in such cases is elsewhere laid down to be, the requiring of much where much is given, and the requiring of little where little is given ;—a principle of the strictest equity.

An unguarded opinion as to the irresistibility of grace, and the passiveness of man in conversion, has also been assumed, and made to give an air of plausibility to the predestinarian scheme. It is argued, if our salvation is of God, and not of ourselves, then those only can be saved to whom God gives the grace of conversion ; and the rest, not having this grace

afforded them, are, by the inscrutable counsel of God, passed by, and reprobated.

This is an argument *à posteriori* ; from the assumed passiveness of man in conversion, to the election of a part only of mankind to life. The argument *à priori* is from partial election to life, to the doctrine of irresistible grace, as the means by which the divine decree is carried into effect. The doctrine of such an election has already been refuted ; and it will be easy to show that it derives no support from the assumption that grace must work irresistibly in man in order that the honour of our salvation may be secured to God, which is the plausible dress in which the doctrine is generally presented.

It is allowed, and all scriptural advocates of the universal redemption of mankind will join with the Calvinists in maintaining the doctrine, that every disposition and inclination to good which originally existed in the nature of man is lost by the fall ; that all men, in their simply natural state, are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and have neither the will nor the power to turn to God ; and that no one is sufficient of himself to think or do any thing of a saving tendency. But, as all men are required to do those things which have a saving tendency, we contend that the grace to do them has been bestowed upon all. Equally sacred is the doctrine to be held, that no person can repent or truly believe except under the influence of the Spirit of God ; and that we have no ground of boasting in ourselves, but that all the glory of our salvation, commenced and consummated, is to be given to God alone, as the result of the freeness and riches of his grace.

It will also be freely allowed, that the visitations of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit are vouchsafed in the first instance, and in numberless other subsequent cases, quite independent of our seeking them or desire for them ; and that when our thoughts are thus turned to serious considerations, and various exciting and quickening feelings are produced within us, we are often wholly passive ; and also, that men are sometimes suddenly and irresistibly awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger by the Spirit of God, either through



the preaching of the word instrumentally or through other means, and sometimes, even, independent of any external means at all; and are thus constrained to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" All this is confirmed by plain verity of holy writ; and is also as certain a matter of experience as that the motions of the Holy Spirit do often silently intermingle themselves with our thoughts, reasonings, and consciences, and breathe their milder persuasions upon our affections.

From these premises the conclusions which legitimately flow are in direct opposition to the Calvinistic hypothesis. They establish,

1. The justice of God in the condemnation of men, which their doctrine leaves under a dark and impenetrable cloud. More or less of these influences from on high visit the finally impenitent, so as to render their destruction their own act by resisting them. This is proved, from the Spirit having striven with those who were finally destroyed by the flood of Noah; from the case of the finally impenitent Jews and their ancestors, who are charged with always resisting the Holy Ghost; from the case of the apostates mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, who are said to have done despite to the Spirit of grace; and from the solemn warnings given to men in the New Testament, not to grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. If, therefore, it appears that the destruction of men is attributed to their resistance of those influences of the Holy Spirit, which, but for that resistance, would have been saving, according to the design of God in imparting them, then is the justice of God manifested in their punishment; and it follows, also, that his grace so works in men, as to be both sufficient to lead them into a state of salvation, and even often actually to place them in this state, and yet so as to be capable of being finally and fatally frustrated.

2. These premises, also, secure the glory of our salvation to the grace of God; but not by implying the Calvinistic notion of the continued and uninterrupted irresistibility of the influence of grace and the passiveness of man, so as to deprive him of his agency; but by showing that his agency, even when rightly directed, is upheld and influenced by the superior power

of God, and yet so as to be still his own. For, in the instance of the mightiest visitation we can produce from Scripture, that of St. Paul, we see where the irresistible influence terminated, and where his own agency recommenced. Under the impulse of the conviction struck into his mind, as well as under the dazzling brightness which fell upon his eyes, he was passive, and the effect produced for the time necessarily followed ; but all the actions consequent upon this were the results of deliberation and personal choice. He submits to be taught in the doctrine of Christ ; he confers not with flesh and blood ; he is not disobedient to the heavenly vision ; he faints not under the burdensome ministry he had received ; and he keeps his body under subjection, lest after having preached to others he should himself become a castaway. All these expressions, so descriptive of consideration, choice, and effort, show that the irresistible impulse was not permanent, and that he was subsequently left to improve it or not, though under a powerful but still a resistible motive operating upon him to remain faithful.

For the gentler emotions produced by the Spirit, these are, as the experience of all Christians testifies, the ordinary and general manner in which the Holy Spirit carries on his work in man ; and if all good desires, resolves, and aspirations are from him, and not from our own nature, (and, if we are utterly fallen, from our own nature they cannot be,) then, if any man is conscious of having ever checked good desires, and of having opposed his own convictions and better feelings, he has in himself abundant proof of the resistibility of grace, and of the superability of those good inclinations which the Spirit is pleased to impart. He is equally conscious of the power of complying with them, though still in the strength of grace ; which yet, whilst it works in him to will and to do, neither wills nor acts for him, nor even by him, as a passive instrument. For if men were wholly and at all times passive under divine influence ; not merely in the reception of it, (for all are, in that respect, passive,) but in the actings of it to practical ends ; then would there be nothing to mark the difference between the righteous and the wicked but an act of God,—

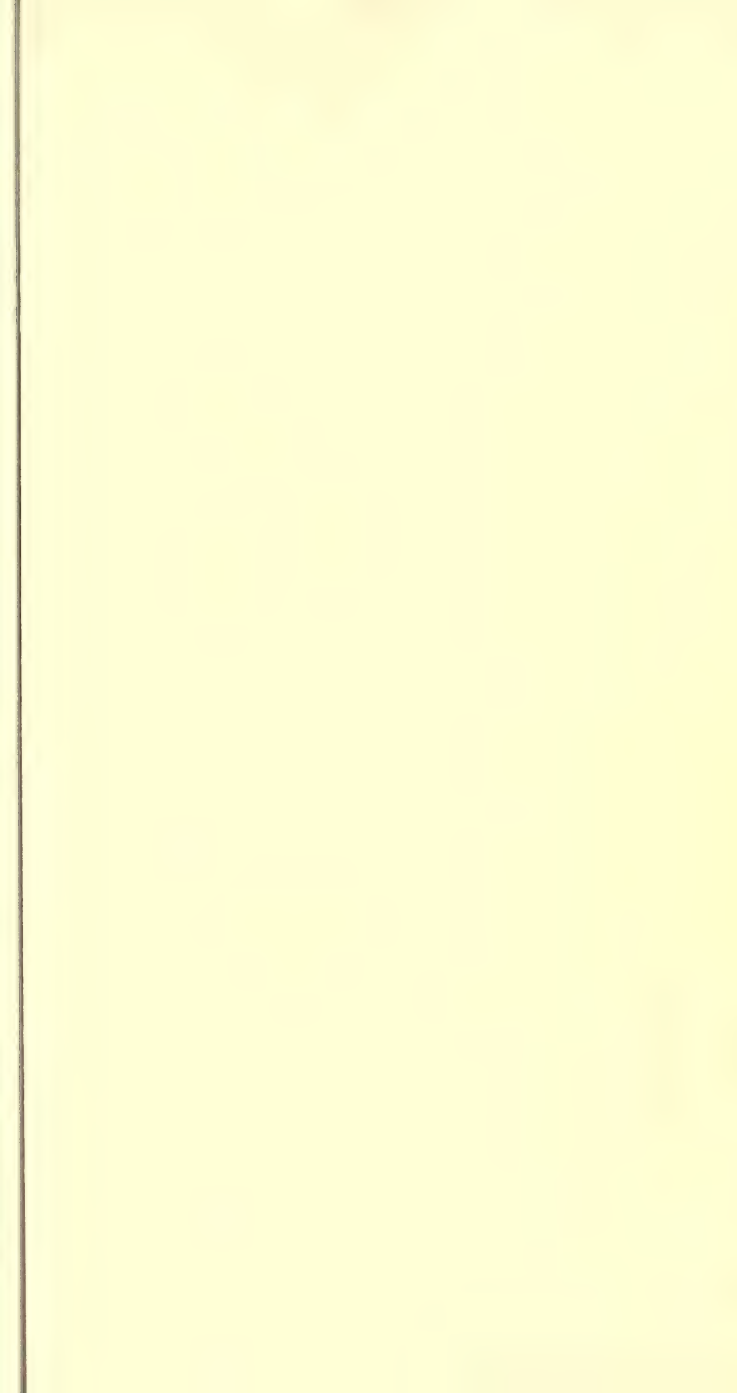
which is utterly irreconcilable to the Scriptures. They call the former "obedient," the latter "disobedient;" one "willing," the other "unwilling;" and promise or threaten accordingly. They attribute the destruction of the one to their refusal of the grace of God, and the salvation of the other, as the instrumental cause, to their acceptance of it; and to urge that that personal act by which we embrace the grace of Christ, detracts from his glory as our Saviour by attributing our salvation to ourselves, is to speak as absurdly as if we should say that the act of obedience and faith required of the man who was commanded to stretch out his withered arm, detracted from the glory of Christ's healing virtue, by which, indeed, the power of complying with the command and condition of his being healed was imparted.

It is by such reasonings, made plausible to many minds by an affectation of metaphysical depth and subtilty, or by pretensions of magnifying the sovereignty and grace of God, (often, we doubt not, very sincere,) that the theory of election and reprobation, as held by the followers of Calvin with some shades of difference, but in all substantially the same, has had currency given to it in the church of Christ in these latter ages. How unsound and how contrary to the Scriptures they are, may appear from that brief refutation of them just given; but I repeat, what was said above, that we are never to forget that this system has generally had interwoven with it many of the most vital points of Christianity. It is this circumstance which has kept it in existence; for otherwise it had never, probably, held itself up against the opposing evidence of so many plain scriptures, and that sense of the benevolence and equity of God, which his own revelations, as well as natural reason, have riveted in the convictions of mankind. In one respect, the Calvinistic and the Socinian schemes have tacitly confessed the evidence of the word of God to be against them. The latter has shrunk from the letter and common-sense interpretation of Scripture within the clouds raised by a licentious criticism; the other has chosen rather to find refuge in the mists of metaphysical theories. Nothing is, however, here meant by this juxta-position of theories so contrary to each



other, but that both thus confess, that the *primâ facie* evidence afforded by the word of God is not in their favour. If we intended more by thus naming on the same page systems so opposite, one of which, with all its faults, contains all that truth by which men may be saved, whilst the other excludes it, we "should offend against the generation of the children of God."

THE END.











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